

2012

A Marriage Program to Strengthen and Support Marriage Relationships at the Multicultural Community of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church

Augustus Cafuema Lawrence

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ABSTRACT

A MARRIAGE PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT
MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITY OF THE MILTON KEYNES
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Augustus Cafuema Lawrence

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A MARRIAGE PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT
MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITY OF THE MILTON KEYNES SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: July 2012

Problem

Marriage is an important institution and adjusting to it may be a challenge. More so, intercultural married couples have their own set of challenges. Here, like any other marriage, intercultural married couples face instability by endeavoring to accommodate each other's style of life derived from the family of origin. Intercultural married couples are dyads that are made up of male and female couples with different cultural background. Moreover, settling in a new location or uprooting from one country to another poses an ever greater likelihood of encountering problems because intercultural couples hold even more diverse value systems, beliefs and attitudes. This experience is

reflected in the marital instability among members in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Church, a multicultural community. For example, marital satisfaction is one factor that may influence intercultural marriage resulting in a compounded effect. Any efforts to help couples negotiate from a transition of individuality to partnership in their relationship positively channeling challenges may be helpful. As a ministry leader, I have seen the immense challenges many intercultural couples encounter and as a result, there is a need for research and programs to help make a difference in addressing their marital challenges. Therefore, the researcher is proposed a study to accomplish this. It is a program designed to help intercultural marriages through educational inventions that give attention to the unique difficulties and challenges facing intercultural couples.

Method

The *Evaluating and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication, Happiness* (ENRICH) inventory that measures marital satisfaction, marital communication, conflict resolution and idealistic distortion was administered to the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church married couples to assess marital satisfaction and the factors that influence marital satisfaction. Each couple responded to 35 statements and the responses were totaled for each subscale. The responses were analyzed and an intervention for married couples, *The Empowering Couple's Seminars*, was contextualized into 10 one-hour and thirty minute seminars over 10 weeks was administered. The same inventory was administered to the same sample group; and the results were compared.

Results

Thirty-six (36) individuals (18) couples were involved in this study at the Milton

Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church in London. This study was a pioneering work with the Adventist Church in Milton Keynes with results indicating four main areas that influenced these multicultural couples' relationships: Marital satisfaction, couple communication, couple conflict resolution and idealistic distortion. The results also indicated a great need for more emphasis on family and marriage enrichment ministry. The findings show that marital couples of the multicultural community of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church benefited from the enrichment program.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study is limited to the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, London. This study supports a large body of research that has found no significant difference in the factors that impact marital satisfaction. Individual marital couples' stories and experiences may differ based on culture, country, or ethnicity, but differences and negativity that impact marriage are not very different, even though they share the same key feature of a strong biblical foundation for marriage. As a result of the findings of the study, to effectively enrich and strengthen multicultural couples, enrichment educational programs should take a keen interest in understanding cultural and ethnic dynamics. The findings of this study suggest that the intervention used in the study may be a contributing factor in strengthening marriages and reducing problem areas.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS AT THE MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITY OF THE MILTON KEYNES
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Augustus Cafuema Lawrence

July 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who helps me in all things through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am extremely grateful to my terrific wife, Barbara, for her patience and support over the last 13 years of marriage. My wife has suggested many things I did not know before. I thank her very much for her love and hard work. I also want to thank our talented and patient son, Nathanael, for his understanding and support during the writing of this project.

It was my late mother who inspired me to study and never to give up. From a very humble beginning, she instilled in all her children the value of education. At the resurrection, I will tell her, again, “Thank you, Ma!”

I am grateful to all my brothers and sisters in both Liberia, Germany, and the United States for their moral and spiritual support. They always kept me in their prayers and I thank them for that.

I am thankful for all the help my advisor Dr. Trevor O’Reggio gave me from the very beginning to the end. I thank him for his humility, encouragement, knowledge, and advice. My deep appreciation for the enormous support, encouragement, and supervision I received from Dr. Alanzo Smith. I thank him for being a valuable mentor, a Shepherd Leader, and friend. His ministry over the years first inspired my interest in family ministry.

To Ken Murage, my statistician: Your help and skills in statistics helped me, and I thank you very much.

I cannot overestimate the support and kindness that Rita Pusey and the Doctor of Ministry Office gave to me. Without the financial discount I received, it would have been impossible for me to get on this course in the first place. I thank Dr. A. Allan Martin for being a wonderful and inspiring coach. He was like a parent to each of us and I personally thank him for his support and professionalism.

I am very grateful to the professors whose classes I was privileged to take: Dr. Rene Drumm, for the impact on my personal life and ministry and showing through her teaching the language of relationship; Dr. Derek Morris, for mentoring what it really means to be a humble spiritual leader; Dr. Curtis Fox, for opening a new dimension of leading a strong pastoral ethics. I thank them for their encouragement and great friendship.

My special infinite gratefulness goes to my editor, Averil Kurtz for being so compassionate with my “Liberian” English and me. I thank her for her skill in editing, attention to detail, and very wise counsel. I am extremely grateful to Camille Clayton for her expert skill, humility, and sound suggestions. I truly appreciate her hard work and support.

I must show gratitude and appreciation to the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventist family and the President, in particular, Pastor Sam Davis for believing and supporting me with this project. I thank all of them.

Finally, I express infinite appreciation and gratitude to each of my colleagues of the Family Ministry Cohort 2007 for mentoring to me what it truly means to be a family ministry leader. My thanks to these people!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is an important institution, and adjusting to it may be a challenge. Moreover, intercultural married couples have their own set of challenges. Here, like any other marriage, intercultural couples face instability by endeavoring to accommodate each other's style of life, derived from the family of origin. Moreover, settling in a new location or uprooting from one country to another poses an ever greater likelihood of encountering problems, because intercultural couples hold even more diverse value systems, beliefs, and attitudes. This experience is reflected in the marital instability among members in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Church, a multicultural community. For example, marital satisfaction is one factor that may influence intercultural marriage resulting in a compounded effect. Any efforts to help couples negotiate from a transition of individuality to a partnership that positively channels challenges may be helpful. As a ministry leader, I have seen the immense challenges many intercultural couples encounter and as a result, there is a need for research and programs to help make a difference in addressing their marital challenges. Therefore, the current study attempts to accomplish this. It is a program designed to help intercultural marriages through educational inventions that will give attention to the unique difficulties and challenges facing intercultural couples.

Statement of the Task

This project seeks to contextualize and implement an existing marriage seminar that will relate to the needs of marital families within the multicultural community in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Justification for the Project

Family stability in Britain has been in continuous decline for four decades (Smith et al, 2007). This decline is reflected in the marital instability among members in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Church, a multicultural community. Over the years, numerous married couples have either divorced or separated, while several others are experiencing severe marital stress and instability. Such an experience is not unique to the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church. Pastoral colleagues have indicated that the impact of marital decline has been profound and multifaceted in their own congregations. There has not been any specific marriage enrichment education program in the Milton Keynes Church. In fact, since the last few years, married couples have confirmed that there has been no such program. Consequently, there is a real need for a marriage enrichment education tool for all couples.

The problem of marital instability is made more challenging since the multicultural membership of the local church has little or no preventive resources to adequately relate to their members' marital needs. It has also been discovered that little has been done by the church in London to adequately address the factors responsible for the decline of marriages among the membership of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church.

There are other concerns that these multicultural couples must confront. For example, this multicultural community finds it challenging to deal with the vast inter-cultural and social differences that often have a negative effect on their marital relationships, thus impacting marital satisfaction. In addition, this multicultural community—because of its strong cultural stance of being passive rather than assertive—may find it difficult to admit to an existing marital problem it cannot solve, and hence, may endure much internal pain, leading to either divorce or separation. This project assists in identifying the needs and concerns of this membership, a multicultural community. Therefore, this project is undertaken with a sincere burden to identify the cultural factors that impact marital satisfaction and the membership, and provide the marriage enrichment education tools and skills to understand and integrate as part of their values.

Limitations of the Project

This study surveyed couples that responded to the invitation to participate in a marriage enrichment seminar in 2011. The intent was to ascertain information and assess marriages in a particular local church in London, England. Therefore, no conclusion can be drawn from this study regarding the relationship satisfaction of multicultural couples in the general population. Also, this research is not a quantitative study but rather a qualitative one, therefore illustrations and numbers that are used to describe the performance of the participants, are not intended for statistical analysis but are used primarily to draw inferences. The findings of the study reflect the current status of marital relationship in one particular church of 166 members in Milton Keynes. Moreover, since measuring marital satisfaction in a multicultural context is challenging, because of

conflicting values and preferences, future research should use a measuring instrument that takes cultural values and beliefs into consideration, rather than relying exclusively on a psychometric measure that is predominately developed for a Caucasian context. Given this, although the ENRICH instrument has been developed and used mostly among Caucasians, it has been tested and proved useful especially in this study.

Description of the Project Process

The theological reflection necessary for undertaking this project focuses on the important passages of biblical and theological teachings on marriage in both the Old and New Testaments. The intent is to understand God's plan for marriage. It is from this understanding that a working definition of God's intention for marriage is derived and applied.

A review of the literature was carried out to determine the factors that influence marriage satisfaction, especially in the context of multicultural couples.

The ENRICH Inventory was taken among the members of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three months prior to the survey, verbal and written announcements were made, inviting the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church members to participate freely in a family survey. Those who indicated their willingness to participate were given a clear outline of the formation of the family research. The survey was given to members of the Milton Keynes Church only and an analysis of the survey was carried out to assess problem areas of the couple's marital relationship.

Based on the findings of the ENRICH questionnaires, an existing marriage seminar was contextualized into 1 one-and-a-half-hour seminars and presented over a ten-week period. The church members were informed that if they chose to participate in

the research, they would need to attend all ten seminars. At the end of the tenth seminar, participants were asked to take the same ENRICH survey again. The results of both surveys were compared and contrasted to see what impact, if any, the seminars had on the participants. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made. A report of significant findings was formulated and shared with other churches with the same ethnic mix in an effort to create awareness, address problems, and provide solutions to the problems. The seminars used in this study was the Empowering Couple's Seminars for Married Couples.

Expectation from This Project

It is hoped that this project will help me understand some of the reasons for marital instability among the members of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church. This project will help me discover the marital needs of the families and devise a plan to relate to those needs and how to navigate through them. This project will also help me develop particular skills and a capacity to work with this multicultural community and their marital challenges. Moreover, this project will be made available to other Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the area with similar needs, thus giving them the opportunity to make use of the resources.

Outline of Project

1. Chapter One lays out the statement of the problem, the statement of the task, justification for the project, the limitations of the project, the description of the project process, and the outline of the project.
2. Chapter Two presents a theological and biblical reflection of God's intention for marriage in both the Old and New Testaments.

3. Chapter Three discusses literature that influences marital satisfaction in a general sense, but more specifically, in multicultural couples.

4. Chapter Four gives an analysis of the marital needs of the couples using the ENRICH Couples Survey. This chapter also discusses the methodology of the project, the measure and instruments used to assess marriages, the subjects of the study, the procedures used to score the survey, and how the instrument was administered.

5. Chapter Five presents the findings and meaning of the study, the implications for ministry, recommendation for future research, and the conclusions used to assess problem areas of a couple's marital relationship.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION OF MARRIAGE

This chapter reviews the important passages on biblical and theological teachings on marriage. The author intends to develop a working biblical theology of marriage derived from important passages in both the Old and New Testaments. The final section of this chapter seeks to apply understanding of the passages to the context of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, a multicultural community.

The Bible Is Foundational for Understanding Marriage

For the Christian, the Bible is central and foundational on all topics. It is the basis for any theological reflection or discussion and must be the platform on which one must stand to begin a dialogue on marital relationship. An adequate theology of marriage must be constructed within the framework of an understanding of human relationships as part of God's good creation. To depart from this stance would render any theological reflection a mere philosophical exercise. The Bible, therefore, should become the starting point for understanding and reflecting on marriage and marital challenges. This project focuses on important passages relevant to this study, recognizing that there are many passages of Scripture that are foundational to the study of marriage.

Marriage in the Old Testament

As set forth in the creation account of Genesis 2, it was God's intention to call

human beings to a loving relationship with Himself, and with other human beings. If God is not transcendent and isolated, but a Being who wants to commune with human beings because he is also immanent, then at least part of what it means to be part of God's creation is to be called into a loving relationship characterized with commitment and the giving of oneself to the other. It was Dian Garland (1999) who declared that the goodness of God's creation when it comes to human beings is the potential and need for relationship with one another. Similarly, Lawrence J. Crabb (1982) argued that the theme of relationship is so prominent in the biblical story, because it is only through this context of relationship that the deepest needs of human personality can be met.

So, what exactly, does the Bible have to say about marriage? This section explores some of the key biblical passages on marriage in the Old Testament.

Marriage did not originate from a human expediency, nor was it devised from a fabricated arrangement. Instead, it was divinely created and instituted by God. It was Ellen White (1958) who held that God Himself, in Eden, performed the first marriage ceremony, when He pronounced all things very good. It was in Eden that the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, a man shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one," He enunciated the principle of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. In addition, David Gushee (2004) has asserted that, if we believe the biblical record, then marriage is a structure of creation. It means that marriage comes from God and is not merely a human creation. It was Geoffrey Bromiley (1980) who said that God is the author and originator of the marriage relationship. Similarly, Ellen White (1958) affirmed that God celebrated

the first marriage. She affirmed that the marriage institution has, for its originator, the Creator of the universe.

Genesis 2:24-25

Even though marriage is not the exclusive or primary focus of the Scripture (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010), it is rooted in the will of the Creator. Thus, God's original plan and purpose for marriage is clearly set out in Gen 2:24-25: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. In addition, they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (KJV).

The verses above are important to understanding God's intention for marriage. In his work, *Trite or Tragic*, Robert B. Lawton (1986) observed that v. 25 can be understood as a description of the divine intention for all human marriage. In essence, God takes Adam and Eve's relationship as a pattern for which future marital relationships should follow. According to E. G. White (1899), the first marriage was an example of what all marriages should be. God gave the man one wife. The phrase "the man and his wife" gives an indication that this relationship was monogamous and heterosexual and to be shared by only the two married partners. In addition, O. J. Baad (1962) stated that the creation account in Genesis of the first marriage is clearly in monogamous terms. Moreover, Walter Wegner (1970) argued that if we are correct in viewing the union of Adam and Eve of Genesis 1 and 2 as the family God wants it to be, then there can be no doubt that the marriage held up for the emulation of ancient Israel was a monogamous one.

The becoming “one flesh” makes clear what the process will seek to discover: both intimacy and closeness. It is this journey to discover the nature of God’s original plans and purpose for marriage that the multicultural couples at the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church eagerly attempt to realize in enhancing their marital satisfaction.

The Idea of Leaving

A closer examination of Gen 2:24-25 may provide a fuller understanding of the central components of the biblical view of marriage. First, v. 24 says, “A man will leave his father and his mother.” The first step according to the Scripture is the leaving of all other relationships including parental. The Hebrew word for “leave” is *‘azab*. This verb, which expresses the idea of force, literally means “to abandon or forsake.” According to the Old Testament text (Deut 28:20; Jdg 10:13; 2 Chr 34:25; Isa 1:4), this word illustrates or describes Israel’s forsaking of Yahweh for false gods. The text requires both man and woman to take a bold and exclusive step in leaving everything that would interfere with this new union.

Even though the idea of leaving father and mother would be a strange stance to take inasmuch as it forces a person to relinquish himself from the most sacred obligations and social responsibilities, the text puts loyalty to his wife as paramount. It is asserted that the man’s desire for his wife is so intense that it breaks the strongest bond (Kalland, 1981). According to Samuel Terrien (1985), maintaining these kinship connections would encroach upon their independence and freedom in the marriage relationship and inhibit the couple’s ability to be loyal to each other, especially of the man to his wife. It should be pointed out, however, that while the couples may leave and cleave to each other, this

does not negate the obligation or exclude them from honoring their parents. Neither does it mean that they should sever all connections with their parents. This leaving makes the priority of the man to change from his parents to his wife. It is important to note that the divine prescription for marriage appears to run contrary to the accustomed practices of some multicultural families who are culturally tied to parents, let alone to leave them. The burden that this text transfers to these families can sometimes create tension and instability in the future when much attention is not given to it.

The Idea of Cleaving and Permanence

The second component of the biblical view of marriage in Gen 2:24 is “cleave.” The Hebrew word used for “cleave,” is *dabaq*. This word, according to Earl Kalland (1981), suggests a strong personal attachment. The original imagery of the word implies clinging, sticking, remaining physically close, as a girdle to the loins or as skin to flesh and flesh to bone. Elsewhere in the Bible (Deut 10:20; 11:22; Josh 22:5), it is a technical covenant term illustrating total commitment of Israel to the Lord. Moreover, this word, according to Raymond Collins (1977), emphasized the idea of devotion and an unshakeable faith between two humans connoting a permanent attraction that transcends genital union to which, nonetheless, it gives meaning. Deducing from the above, this word teaches that it is in the intention of God that husband and wife would live in a wholehearted commitment embracing exclusive loyalty to each other. It fuses together a union between the man and woman that spells permanence, regardless of impending conflict and marital instability.

The Idea of One Flesh

There is a third and final component on which the biblical foundation of marriage rests. In Gen 2:24, it is said, “[A]nd they become one flesh.” As a result of the leaving and cleaving, the man and the woman form a new relationship. The expression that is used here is *basar ’eHad*, “one flesh.” This term, as used in the Old Testament, makes reference, in part, to the physical body, but more importantly, to the person’s whole existence in the world. It was Otto Piper (1960) who said that the idea of one flesh suggests mutual dependence and reciprocity in all areas of life. Moreover, *basar ’eHad* (Leupold, 1942) gives the idea of complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in sexual intercourse. One needs to clarify that this “one flesh” experience does not find its fulfillment exclusively in sexual intercourse. However, it is inclusive of the total person embracing the emotional, physical, and spiritual. It glues together the innermost dimensions of the complete man and the complete woman, experiencing oneness and intimacy in their leaving and cleaving. Perhaps it is appropriate to suggest that oneness, or becoming one flesh, does not rob either the man or the woman of his/her identity. Kerr and Bowen (1988) affirmed that two basic life forces are held together: the drive for individuality and the drive for togetherness. Neither of these is lost in the one-flesh experience. It was God’s intention that, central to the marriage relationship, both the man and the woman should seek to develop and become intimate companions.

The Idea of Monogamy

Is the marital relationship in Genesis 1 and 2 a monogamous, permanent, and heterosexual relationship? The marriage that the Bible speaks about in Genesis 1 and 2

takes place between one man and one woman. The record shows that the man says of the woman that “she shall be called woman” (Gen 2:23). A “man” leaves his parents and is joined to “his wife” (Gen 2:24). The Creation design of marriages as seen in Gen 1 and 2, then, indicates that the original marital form can be seen as heterogenous, monogamous and rules out homosexuality and polygamy. Geoffrey Parrinder (1950) makes the point that the first human beings are represented as having been one man with one wife clearly setting up monogamy as the original intention of God for the human race. Ellen White (1899) reiterated that the first marriage was an example of what all marriages should be. God gave the man one wife. Had he deemed it best for man to have more than one wife he would as easily have given him two, but he sanctified no such thing. One can conclude that monogamous relationship is the marital form that represents the will of God.

The Idea of Heterosexuality

Moreover, according to the marital prescription of Genesis, it becomes obviously clear that the relationship is between a man and a woman showing that it is a relationship between the opposite sexes. In Gen 1:27 and 28, the male and female are given the mandate to be fruitful. The man calls the female who is given to him “woman.” Thus, the “man” will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife (2:24). From this, one can clearly see that the form of marriage here is heterosexual.

Samuel Dresner (1991), in *Homosexuality and the Order of Creation*, argued that heterosexuality is at once proclaimed to be the order of creation. Similarly, Andrew Dearman (1996) holds that in the Genesis accounts one finds the theological basis of marriage rooted in the complementary nature of human kind as male and female created in God’s image. It was Greg Bahnsen (1978) who affirmed that the expression of sex in

the Bible is in the context of marriage exclusively heterosexual in nature. This biblical stance clearly rules out homosexual relationships. Ellen White (1980) strongly affirmed and reiterated that God gave Adam one wife—showing all who would live upon the earth his order and law in this respect.

In summary, Genesis 1 and 2 provides silent insight into the nature of the marital relationship God provided for his people. Marriage is an original part of God's creative design. God created the man and the woman for each other in a monogamous relationship. The instructions he gave are clear in which it is said that a man and woman are to leave father and mother and cleave to their spouse in a binding covenant relationship. This marriage covenant is intended to be lifelong and permanent.

Three Views on the Nature of Marriage

Marriage as a Sacrament

Within the framework of Genesis 2:24-25, theologians have tried to understand the nature of marriage by constructing three basic views (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). First is the view that marriage is a sacramental bond whose benefits are procreation of children, fidelity, and the sacramental union. Accordingly, the proponent of this view, Augustine, was attempting to show that marriage creates a holy and permanent bond between a man and a woman depicting Christ and His Church. However, the Catholic Church redefined and extended this meaning of marriage, inferring that the institution of marriage itself dispenses grace to all couples that enter into it. One important drawback of this view is that the Bible does not teach that there is something in the nature of marriage that can dispense grace. Thus, the sacramental bond as posited by the Catholic Church is a tradition rather than a meaning as taught from the Bible.

Marriage as a Contract

Secondly, marriage has been viewed over the centuries as a contractual model (Witte, 1997). While the sacramental model sees marriage as a medium through which grace is dispensed to the couples that enter marriage, the contractual model does not attempt to embrace or invoke biblical teachings as its starting point. Advocates of this view see marriage as a contract between two individuals whom may enter, form, or dissolve it voluntarily. Contractual marriages are rooted in civil laws and are governed by such laws. A drawback of this model is that marital permanence does not come into play, as the relationship can be dissolved if one party breaks a contractual term.

Marriage as a Covenant

The third and final view of marriage is the covenantal model. The church has regarded marriage as a covenant between a husband and wife reflecting the covenant between Christ and the Church, which, in turn, refers to the Old Testament covenants between God and human beings. Covenant relationship was God's way of connecting with, not just individuals, but also with the entire house of Israel. Even though his people did not show or deserve his great love and kindness, God entered into a covenant relationship to demonstrate that he is a God of love, mercy, longsuffering, and faithfulness. The husband and wife relationship was often used as an example or metaphor to illustrate to the people that he is a God whose compassion is measureless.

On the basis of Gen 2:24 John Stott (1984) ably asserted that marriage is an exclusive, heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent, mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of

children. In a broad way, Paul Williamson (2000) argued that a covenant, as understood in biblical terms, gives the idea of a solemn commitment, guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both covenanting parties. For example, God made covenants between himself and human beings in the cases of Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. Thus, W. J. Dumbrell (1995) suggested that in the beginning, from the very first covenant that God initiates, his goal is to reestablish the relationship of God to humankind and creation. Accordingly, covenants can be understood as an initiative initiated by God Himself to restore the lost relationship in Genesis 1 and 2. Covenant making is God's way of responding to the human, broken relationships between himself and human beings, but more especially between married couples.

David Atkinson (1979) said,

The marriage covenant is the commitment of a man and a woman to each other into an exclusive relationship of moral 'troth' which is intended to be permanent, and to be patterned on and in its turn display the meaning and character of God's relationship with his people, Christ's with his Church. (p. 89)

The Old Testament portrayed several biblical passages that illustrate how covenants are used in reference to God's relationship to his people.

Ezekiel 16 and the Covenant Relationship

In Ezekiel 16, God spoke about his covenant relationship with "Jerusalem" in which He said about her, "I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you . . . and you became mine" (Ezek 16:8). However, according to the text, Jerusalem played the part of a harlot because she was guilty of promiscuous adultery (Ezek 16:15-34). Consequent to Jerusalem's behavior, God made it clear that he would punish her by sentencing her to the punishment of women who commit adultery (Ezek 16:38).

Nevertheless, even though the behavior of Jerusalem was far worse than that of her sister Sodom (Ezek 16:46-52) and although Jerusalem had deliberately and persistently disregarded God by breaking the covenant (Ezek 16:59), yet God held out His hands to her and said, “I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you” (Ezek 16:60). That is, God is bringing forgiveness and penitence. The covenant concept in Ezekiel teaches and sets out a pattern for married couples to endeavor to exercise forgiveness with each other.

Hosea 2 and Covenant Relationship

The Old Testament book of Hosea models the covenant marriage relation of husband and wife. This book shows the extent to which God will demonstrate his unsurpassed love for his people. In chapters 1 to 3, the prophet Hosea vividly describes God’s covenant by using a reference to the marital relationship between a man and woman. In a personal way, Hosea’s marital relationship with his wife who was unfaithful and her constant departure from him (Hos 2:5) illustrates the unfaithfulness of Israel to God. God’s people, like Hosea’s wife (Hosea 2:8), had become reckless to God’s blessings and goodness. However unappreciative and reckless Israel had been, God instructed Hosea to go and reclaim his wife although she had played the fool. The lesson marital couples can learn from the book of Hosea is real and authentic. Despite spousal unfaithfulness to the covenant, God’s steadfast love and mercy remain constant and can serve as strength and encouragement for couples.

Unlike the sacramental model that has its roots in the tradition of the church and the contractual model, in civil laws, the covenant model takes the Bible as its foundation. One of the strengths of the covenant theology of marriage is the manner in which it

clearly refutes the current prevalent individualism that characterizes marriages today (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). Covenant theology of marriage conveys “we-ness” rather than “me-ness.” Even though the covenant model of marital theology speaks about “us” rather than “me,” it has its own drawback. The covenant relationship between God and humans is asymmetrical and not one between two equal individuals. Even though a man and a woman are called to treat each other as equals, it is possible that this could be misconstrued as becoming a relationship void of sacrificial love for wives.

Malachi 2 and the Covenant Relationship

Gordon Hugenberger (1998), through his extensive study on the biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant, argued that despite rather limited direct references to human marriage as a covenantal relationship in the Old Testament and despite longstanding scholarly objections to the claim, the concept can be found there. Thus, the most significant biblical reference to human marriages as a covenant relationship is found in Mal 2:10-16, more specifically, vv. 13-16. The main point Hugenberger (1998) suggests in these verses is that people have broken their covenant relationship as a result of the divorce that has taken place since marriage is a covenant relationship. Malachi makes the following point: “You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand. You ask, ‘Why does he not?’ Because the Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant” (Mal 2:13, 14). It was the people’s unfaithfulness to the covenant relationship that compelled Malachi to give this admonition: “So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his

youth. ‘For I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and covering one’s garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts’” (Mal 2:15, 16). It was Gushee (2004) who said,

Covenant functions as the structural principle of marriage because it takes faithless people and forces them to keep faith. Covenant says: I will be sexually faithful even when my needs for sex are frustrated in my marriage. I will be emotionally and sexually faithful even when my companionship needs are frustrated. I will be faithful in my parental responsibilities even when I am bone-weary of both you and the children. I will be faithful in my communication and forgiveness even when I never want to speak to you again because you have wounded me deeply. I will be faithful in sharing the work responsibilities of family life even when I can barely put one foot in front of the other. I will be faithful in sharing a home and a bed with you even when I want to flee. (p. 138)

It is this relationship that God seeks to bring to married couples that are part of the marital community of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, a multicultural community.

Marriage in the Song of Songs

In the Song of Songs, God’s design for marriage in Gen 1 and 2, including the physical union of husband and wife, is celebrated in the beauty of marital love and intimate expression. The “one flesh” theme (Gen 2:24) as embedded in the text is a longing desire of a spouse to reach God’s ideal for marital relationship, where both husband and wife can once again experience a return to paradise.

This intense marital love is illustrated between Jacob and Rachel. The text makes clear that Jacob served seven years to get Rachel as his wife, but “they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her” (Gen 29:20).

Furthermore, in 1 Samuel 1:5, the picture of an intense, passionate, compulsive nature of love between a man and woman is illustrated by Elkanah’s love for Hannah, where he treated her differently from Peninnah “because he loved her” (1 Sam 1:5).

The Song of Songs champions the expression and intensity of love and intimacy. Chapter 2:5 says, “I am faint with love.” The love that it speaks about can sometimes also take ownership of a person in expressing feelings: “I am my beloved and my beloved is mine” (Song of Songs 6:3). In Chapter 8:6-9, “Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench me; rivers cannot wash it away.” Thus, according to Kostenberger and Jones (2010), the Song of Songs celebrates the beauty of marital love, including its intimate sexual expression.

In his work *Flame of YAHWEH, Sexuality in the Old Testament*, Richard Davidson (2007) deals extensively with the expression and intensity of love and intimacy in the Song of Songs. Davidson argues that the Song of Songs expression of human sexuality embraces God’s ideals for marital relationship in Eden. He presents convincing arguments that surpass this project, suggesting that the Song of Songs affirms and upholds a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between a man and woman, which was permanent. Davidson does so by analyzing the principles found in the Genesis 1 and 2 designs and shows their presence in the Song of Songs. First, Davidson asserts that the marital form of the couple in the Song of Songs suggests a monogamous marital form. Davidson arrives at this conclusion through careful research and analysis showing that the couple in the Song of Songs are Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter, thus suggesting a marital relationship between a man and woman.

In addition, Davidson presents convincing arguments that the relationship between the partners was an exclusive relationship that was permanent. Davidson’s description of this permanent form of marriage is evident through the wedding ceremony.

Above all, it is the intense language of intimacy in the Song of Songs that highlights the beauty of intimacy in marriage. This intense language of intimacy is interspersed throughout the book.

Marriage in the New Testament

The New Testament is replete with references on marriages, especially in the teachings of Jesus and Paul. Both Jesus and Paul affirm and reiterate the principles of marital relationship in Genesis 1 and 2.

Permanence of Marriage: Matthew 19

Matthew 19 brings to account Jesus' dialogue with the Pharisees in their quest for a response regarding divorce. Although the Pharisees' question was about divorce, Jesus gave a response about marriage. The Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" (Matthew 19:3). Jesus' reply goes back to the Genesis account of God's design for marriage:

Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? Therefore, they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate. (Matthew 19:4-6)

The above passage makes several issues clear. First, Jesus endorsed the permanence of marriage. Jesus' response makes clear that a dialogue about divorce must begin with an understanding of God's intention for marriage. Gilbert Bilezikian (1985) makes the point that Jesus holds to the view that the normative source of teaching on marriage was to be found in Gen 1 and 2. John Stott (1984) affirmed that Jesus drew the attention of the Pharisees to the fact that sexuality was a divine creation and that human marriage was a divine ordinance. Further, Stott (1984) makes the point that Jesus bracketed two texts

(Gen 1:27 and 2:24) and made God the author of both. The same Creator who “at the beginning ...made them male and female” also said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two become one flesh.” “They are no longer two, but one.” Therefore, “what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Stott concludes by saying that Jesus’ teaching about the marital bond is clear and unambiguous because it is the divine will for human relationship.

Second, Richard Davidson (2007) believes that Jesus’ direct reference to Genesis 1:27 and 2:23 (as quoted in Matthew 19:5) reiterated his endorsement for a heterosexual relationship. Accordingly, Jesus’ statement, “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female,’ and ‘for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two (man and woman) shall become one flesh’ cemented and solidified Jesus’ acceptance of the prescriptive nature of the creation texts and his understanding that heterosexual, (not homosexual), relations as divinely ordained in Genesis 1 and 2 remains normative in New Testament times.

Third, Davidson (2007) argued that Jesus’ response to the Pharisees (Matt 19:5) upheld and endorsed not only human heterosexual relationships, but makes explicit the point of monogamy “two (man and woman) shall become one flesh.”

In summary, Jesus affirmed the Gen 1 and 2 account of marriage as the source and pattern for an understanding of marital relationships from God’s perspective and He explicitly declared and held that marriage is intended to be a life-long commitment.

Marriage and Romans 7:2

In the book of Romans, the affirmation and reiteration of the permanency of the marriage bond is also emphasized. In Rom 7:2, Paul makes the point that only death can

terminate a marriage and frees a spouse to remarry. However, in 1 Cor 7:10-16, Paul makes the point that married couples can separate, but warns them not to divorce.

Marriage and 1 Corinthians 7

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul provides clear instructions on various issues concerning marriage. Paul is precise in 1 Cor 7:2 regarding his instruction to a Christian man and woman, that due to immorality, a man and woman should have only one spouse. What Paul is endorsing is that sexuality should be expressed in a heterosexual, monogamous marital relationship. When Paul said, “Each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:2), he affirmed his belief that marriage is a monogamous relationship.

In 1 Cor 7:3-4, Paul expressed his recognition and affirmation of the role of sex in the lives of believers. Paul encourages and outlines the importance of both husband and wife in fulfilling their marital duty to each other by expressing themselves sexually on a regular basis. In 1 Cor 7:5, Paul provides instructions to husband and wife to refrain from withholding sexual relations unless by mutual consent for a brief time of personal prayer. Here, Paul is trying to teach the appropriate expression of sexuality.

In 1 Cor 7:7, 8, Paul gives his personal view on marriage. He posits that it is a good thing not to marry and that both the unmarried and widows should emulate his example. However, in 1 Cor 7:9, he encourages marriage for those who are single with strong sexual desires. In 1 Cor 7:10, 11, Paul states that a wife must not separate from her husband. However, if that happens, she is not free to marry, but should be reconciled back to her husband. In v. 11, Paul concludes by instructing a husband not to divorce his

wife. What Paul is affirming is that God's intention is for marriage to be a permanent relationship.

In 1 Cor 7:12-16, Paul teaches the importance of a marital relationship where the spouse may or may not share a common faith. Paul states that marriage to an unbelieving spouse is not to be dissolved if the believer is willing to live with the unbelieving spouse. However, if the spouse who is an unbeliever leaves the relationship, then the believing spouse will be free from obligation. In 1 Cor 7:17-24, Paul encourages and challenges the believer not to divorce, but to allow him or herself to be an influence to the unbelieving spouse.

In 1 Cor 7:11-24, Paul provides a good platform for couples who are experiencing marital tension and divorce because of spiritual differences.

In 1 Cor 7:27, Paul warns that "those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this." One can deduce from this verse that marriage is not free from troubles and challenges. Paul brings his instruction to an end by reinforcing and upholding the creation order of marital relationship of permanence and monogamy as God's intent by declaring, "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39).

Marriage and Ephesians 5

Whereas 1 Cor 7 addresses Paul's response to specific marital questions and issues, Eph 5:21-33, according to Richard Davidson (2007), is the New Testament foundational passage dealing with husband wife relations. Davidson believes this passage highlights the significance of husband-wife relationships, rather than man-woman

relationships, in general. Samuel Bacchiocchi (1991) argues that Eph 5:31-32 shows how Paul uses the marriage union as an example of the covenant relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church: “For this reason a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one” (Eph 5:30, 31). Davidson (2007) gives a comprehensive summary of the silent points contained in Ephesians 5:21-33. First and foremost, Davidson believes that the context of the Pauline counsel for husbands and wives is characterized by “mutual submission” (Eph 5:21). Paul states that both husband and wife have mutual obligations. Ellen White (1952) writes that the two who unite their interest in life will have distinct characteristics and individual responsibilities. The wife is to respect her husband and the husband is to love and cherish his wife; as their marriage vow unites them as one, so their belief in Christ should make them one in Him. This understanding of the husband-wife relationship is very useful as couples seek to build their commitment to each other. It was John Stott (1998) who sought to shed insight on the difficult problem of respect and submission when he clarified the difference between the two by saying that it is not easy to distinguish clearly between them. What does it mean to submit? It is to give oneself up to somebody. What does it mean to love? It is to give oneself for somebody, as Christ gave Himself up for the church. Thus, submission and love are two aspects of the very same thing, namely, of that selfless self-giving which is the foundation of an enduring and growing marriage.

Second, Eph 5:22 instructs the wife to submit in a voluntary and loving way, not through coercion by her husband. Thus, Ellen White’s assertion to wives is correct when she said that “you now have duties to perform that before your marriage you did not have” (1952, p. 114).

Third, Eph 5 teaches that the wife's submission is not a blind yielding of her individuality. She is to submit only "as you [husband] submit to the Lord" (v. 5).

Further, Davidson (2007) makes the point that the husband's "headship" is parallel to that of Christ who "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph 5:25). Davidson describes the husband's role as a loving servant leadership. According to Witherington (1998), it means taking the lead in serving. It is not an authoritarian rule. It consists of the husband's loving his wife as his own body, nourishing and cherishing her as Christ does the Church (vv. 28, 29). Eve was given to Adam that he should show her special love and care. Ellen White (1958) said that Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. Davidson (2007) summarizes the whole dialogue regarding the headship subscription discussion saying that it centers on love. Thus, it is love of the husband for his wife and respect of the wife for her husband.

Finally, in Eph 5:31, Davidson (2007) concludes that the ultimate ideal for the husband and wife relationship is still the partnership of equals that is set forth from the beginning in Gen 2:24: "They become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31). It is this one flesh that David Atkinson (1979) calls the coming into being of a unitary existence, a complete partnership of man and woman that cannot be broken up without damage to the partners in it. This oneness is essential for peace and tranquility and serves as a source of strength against the challenges of marital relationship.

What does the observation above mean for the multicultural married couples at the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church? First, one should understand that this

is not an ordinary event. It is both significant and serious in terms of commitment, and thus, it should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. It also means that married couples should be willing to embrace and commit to the permanence of marriage since it involves a solemn promise before God rather than before a marriage partner. Second, it means a commitment to the understanding that marriage transcends a mere individual contractual agreement between two consenting adults. It is a sacred union under God between a man and a woman. Far from meaning a medium by which couples may have access to the grace of God, marriage finds its true essence in God's ultimate plan for married couples. Third, it encourages the willingness to grow, deepen, and strengthen over time in a one-flesh relationship. Fourth, it gives to the process of each couple learning and commitment to what it really means to give oneself to each other as recorded in Eph 5:22-24. Finally, this commitment to marriage is not only permanent, God-centered or sacred, intimate and mutual; above all, it is entirely exclusive.

Modeling Commitment: Jacob and Rachel

How can these couples actually live out God's intentions for marital relationship? Although the story of Jacob and Rachel is one full of pain, couples today can learn valuable lessons as they seek to model commitment, despite early family life challenges. In the light of early disappointment, Jacob showed commitment in his desire to have Rachel as his wife by laboring tirelessly to fulfill this goal. The example of Jacob and Rachel's marriage shows young couples that the marital relationship has its share of suffering and difficulties. However, commitment to God in prayer rather than engaging in marital arguments and discord will result in a strong relationship.

There are two things that Jacob and Rachel modeled when it came to

commitment. They understood the importance of a long-term view. That is, regardless of their circumstances, they were committed to each other. Stanley, Trathen, McCain, and Bryan (2002) stressed that a long-term view is crucial for a marriage to thrive over time because it frees a person to grow closer while allowing him/her to feel secure enough to take the risks of disclosure. In contrast, however, where the couple's focus on the long-term view is uncertain, commitment will be short-term and unclear. One can assume that both Jacob and Rachel had a clear long-term view with a strong expectation of a future rooted in solid commitment, despite the imperfection of their marriage. What this means is that couples should be motivated to understand that growth in commitment to marriage is not a swift and abrupt thing. It is a process that is continual over the life of the marriage, involving the couples modeling the love of Christ for His church in which He was willing to exercise sacrificial love. It was Thomas Hart (1979) who said,

If a marriage is growing, it is growing through deaths and resurrections. If it is not growing, it might be because there is a refusal to die the deaths that have to be died and seek in them the direction in which new life is breaking. If Jesus for fear, had refused to die, he would not know the kind of life he now knows as risen Lord, nor would we have the gift of his Spirit. (p. 31)

The point that Hart is making is that every marriage will have bad days in which commitment will be challenged as a result of pain, hurt, and conflict. However, married couples should learn to bury negative feelings and thoughts and, through the grace of God, learn to rise from the grave with a new sense of empowerment to resolve conflicts.

The second thing Jacob and Rachel modeled was a dedication to commitment. From the marital tensions that resulted from Rachel's not being able to conceive a child and the sibling conflict, Jacob showed commitment both to his family and to faith in the

God who showed commitment to His covenant relationship to accommodate his children always.

Multicultural marriages, in conclusion, can celebrate God's intention for their relationships in ways that can be compelling and life changing. Biblically and theologically, God calls couples to embrace and enter into a practical and fresh understanding of what it means to celebrate a commitment to marriage as a high and holy calling mirrored in sacrificial love and self-giving to each other in love.

Ellen G. White and Marriage

Before concluding this biblical and theological reflective dialogue on marriage, it would be instructive to consider some of the extensive counsels Ellen G. White has given to married couples in the context of marital relationships.

Ellen White had much to say about marriage. The index to the writings of Ellen White under "marriage" provides extensive instructional materials. For example, the book, *The Adventist Home*, has been devoted to marriage and the home. In addition, the books *Messages to Young People* and the *Ministry of Healing* have complete sections devoted to marriage and the responsibilities that come with it.

Considering the modern social trends, which aggressively militate against marriage as an institution, Ellen White reaffirmed the true essence of marriage. In the book *The Adventist Home* she says, "Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man, and He began His work by sanctioning the marriage relation" (White, 1952, p. 99). Moreover, in speaking about marriage, Ellen White makes the suggestion in *Counsels for the Church* that marriage "links the destinies of the two individuals with

bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever” (White, 1991, p. 125). What she is advocating is that marriage between a husband and a wife is permanent. She held to the view that “marriage is a step taken for life” (White, 1952, p. 340). According to Ellen White, it (marriage) was instituted by God to serve as a blessing for humanity. “That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man” (White, 1952, p. 341).

Similarly, since White held to the view that Christ sanctioned marriage, recognizing it as an institution He Himself had established, then it is this principle of divine establishment that becomes the basis for resilient marriage. Furthermore, White reiterates that heterosexuality is the norm. She writes, “He (Christ) ordained that men and women should be united in holy wedlock to rear families whose members crowned with honor should be recognized as members of the family above” (White, 1952, p. 99).

One can immediately deduce from studying Ellen White’s teachings on marriage that what she articulates about marriage is an intentional mandate for marriage and marriage enrichment. In her counsels to the newly wedded, White signaled a warning and makes no attempt to give any false illusion about marriage. She says in *Counsels for the Church* (White, 1991, p. 126), “The real union of the two in wedlock is the work of the after years.” White also makes the point that to gain a proper understanding of the marriage relation is the work of a lifetime. Those who marry enter a school from which they are never in this life to be graduated.

Implied in this stance are the understanding that marriage is not for the fainthearted, but one which contains a lifelong commitment. It is a relatively long-term, intimate relationship in which a significant investment of time, energy, and commitment

is made between marital couples where each plays a major, ongoing role in the lives of one another.

Even though marriage adjustments might be difficult for some, White provides encouragement from which married couples can grow and be strengthened. She writes in *The Ministry of Healing* (White, 1905, p. 360):

Though difficulties, perplexities, and discouragements may arise, let neither husband nor wife harbor the thought that their union is a mistake or a disappointment. Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way, encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

Married couples should realize that a marriage enrichment program seeks to strengthen couples' relationships, and the words "study to advance the happiness of each other" are not mere words. Even though the phrase "marriage enrichment" is not mentioned, every married couple including multicultural couples need to study to acquire the skills in understanding the impact of background factors, as well as behavioral challenges to be able to enrich their relationships.

Dealing with Differences

According to Carl A Whitaker (1988) a healthy marriage can be one in which two foreign cultures can blend their lives even if those couples belong to the same ethnic group.

The Milton Keynes multicultural couple community can glean valuable insights from the counsels Ellen White gives in dealing with marital conflict. First, she

acknowledged that all human beings are unique and not the same. In *Gospel Workers* (White, 1915), White writes:

We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, is not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular. The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light are to another most difficult and perplexing. (p. 473)

It is essential to note that every marital relationship will endure difficulty and such difficulty if given the opportunity could breed differences capable of derailing the relationship. What is important is for both couples to recognize these and study to enrich their relationship.

Secondly, since differences have been shown to be a major marital hurdle in that it negatively affects marital satisfaction, multicultural couples must learn that acknowledgment and acceptance should give way to respect. It is important for this multicultural community to come to the understanding that differences do provide opportunities for marital growth and at the same time propel them to greater enjoyment. It allows each to seek the good and the positives in the other. Ellen White (White, 1953) counsels:

Marked diversities of disposition and character frequently exist in the same family, for it is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case, each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the right of the others. By this means mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each. (p. 205)

It was the purpose of this study to assist married couples to perceive and understand the value of couples' conflict as a strength in which they can learn to grow and appreciate each other.

Financial Challenges

It is true that the counsels Ellen White gave regarding marital challenges and blessings were written decades ago, however, they are as current and relevant to the 21st century marital relationship dynamics. For example, social science confirmed that financial management in marital relationships, especially multicultural relationships, might give rise to serious marital conflict ending in divorce or separation.

However, in relation to family finance, Ellen White (White 1952, p. 374) makes the suggestion to couples “to desire to bear your own weight and not to eat the bread of dependence is right.” White took a stance against couples that show financial mismanagement by their attitudes when she said that, “you ought to be careful that your expenses do not exceed your income. Bind about your wants” (White, 1952, p. 375). In addition, she stressed the importance of financial prudence, which will help couples avoid marital stress, but encourage marital satisfaction. Thus she said that “many, very many, have not so educated themselves that they can keep their expenditures within the limit of their income. They do not learn to adapt themselves to circumstances, and they borrow and borrow again and again and become overwhelmed in debt, and consequently they become discouraged and disheartened” (White, 1952, p. 374).

What then can the multicultural couples of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church learn from the counsels of Ellen White as they seek to propel towards God’s ideals for their relationships? First and foremost, the desire to live out God’s ideals for married couples may be attained with the help of the Lord. Ellen White noted that men and women could reach God’s ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper.

What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet firmer, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring. (White, 1952, p. 112)

Secondly, Ellen White upholds the love of God's Grace as the enabling power that will equip married couples to reach God's ideals. It was Jack and Judith Balswick (2006) who said that gracing love as agents of grace, each spouse participates in reciprocal interaction of talking and listening, giving, receiving, honoring differences and affirming giftedness, forgiving and being forgiven. The far-reaching effects of gracing love culminate in a deeply satisfying relationship. Acceptance and forgiveness are the bedrock qualities of gracing love, because the inevitable disappointments and failures of human relationship demand a love that is full of grace.

Thirdly, both husband and wife should be willing to submit to each other since there is no other way of experiencing true happiness in the home until each can yield to the other. Ellen White (White, 1952) makes this plea when she said:

Unless men and women have learned of Christ, His meekness and lowliness, they will reveal the impulsive, unreasonable spirit so often revealed by children. The strong, undisciplined will seek to rule. Such ones need to study the words of Paul: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (p. 118)

Finally, the wealth of marital guidance and enrichment that married couples from every cultural and ethnic background can glean from the writings of Ellen White is comparable to any modern-day marriage enrichment education. Therefore, every couple can seek to study to advance their relationship and enjoy the true happiness that comes from knowing the author of the marriage institution.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researcher looks at the literature on marital satisfaction to investigate the factors that influence it. Specific attention is given to the literature on marital satisfaction among multicultural couples. The purpose of this is to ascertain whether there are multiple factors or a single factor that influences marital satisfaction.

Studies in General on Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is a very important component of relationship adjustment and it affects the overall wellbeing in individual and family experience (Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008). Research shows that marital satisfaction is directly influenced by the quality of couples communication, sexual satisfaction, and conflict resolution. Any concerted efforts to assist couples to communicate effectively and resolve conflict in a more practical and constructive way will aid in marital satisfaction and, therefore, stem the tide of divorce and relationship disruption.

The last 50 years have seen extensive research, in particular, understanding the factors that influence marital satisfaction. In *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness*, the focus was exclusively on the psychological factors in relation to marital happiness (Terman, Butterweiser, Ferguson, Johnson, & Wilson, 1938). Consequent to this work, additional research was done, based primarily on paper and pencil evaluations of both

personality and marital quality (Hicks & Platt, 1970). The focus was to ascertain and understand the profile of the personality as well as to identify personality factors in relation to couple happiness.

During the 1940s, researchers were interested in testing spousal personality characteristics in relation to marital happiness or marital satisfaction. Thus, findings revealed that it was the perception of the spouse's personality, rather than his or her personality per se, that was related to marital happiness (Burgess, Locke, & Thomas, 1971).

Changes in the Focus on Marital Satisfaction Research

However, in the 1950s, there was a paradigm shift from a focus on individuals to a focus on the actual interactional style of individuals in a marital relationship (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956). Here, researchers focused exclusively on the impact of cognition, affect, and behavior to predict poor marital quality. Therefore, according to researchers (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), the emphasis shifted from completing questionnaires to observing the patterns of the couples' interactions. Moreover, as a direct result of what was taking place in the '50s, a number of psychologists evaluated the interactional patterns in a series of studies on how researchers conventionalized and assessed marital satisfaction (Gottman, Markman, & Notarius, 1977). The primary focus during this new wave of research was to undertake a critical look at both behavior and dysfunctional cognition. The drawback, however, was that it was observed that unhappy married couples were far more negative than happy ones. Hence, researchers directed their attention to the importance of affect in experiencing happy and functional marriages (Gottman, 1979).

Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, researchers focused their investigation on factors that are consequential to divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Their finding from a three-year study showed that negative interactional patterns were highly predictive to later divorce. One example is the investigation of the nature of interactions between husband and wife using the demand/withdraw pattern. Findings showed instances where the wife was critical about the husband and the husband would cocoon and disengage, thus affecting marital satisfaction.

Factors that Influence Marital Satisfaction

It is evident and widely agreed among researchers that one cannot comprehensively capture a clear picture of relationship satisfaction from a one-dimensional perspective. Research suggests that marital satisfaction is vastly determined from a multidimensional approach (Allen & Olson, 2001; Bowman, 1990; Glenn, 1990; Gottman & Silver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Johnson & Booth, 1988; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Lavee & Olson, 1993; ; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Negy & Snyder, 2000).

Further, findings show that marital satisfaction is vastly determined from one-dimensional to a more multidimensional approach (Allen & Olson, 2001; Garrett, 2004; Glenn, 1990; Lewis & Spanier, 1979) where couple satisfaction is measured not from a single factor, but from several interacting factors (Billingsley, Lim, Caron, Harris, & Canada, 2005).

Bookwala (2005) agrees that couples who are satisfied with their marriage have benefited physically and have emotional effects. Married couples who have more marital satisfaction have shown lower blood pressure and stress levels (Hold-lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008). Similarly, people who had fewer doctor visits and adequate

sleep were associated with those married couples who had more satisfied marriages (Prigerson, Maciejewski, & Rosenheck, 1999).

In addition, married couples who have more marital satisfaction have demonstrated higher contentment and satisfaction, as well as lower levels of depression (Hold-lunstad et al., 2008). Similarly, research shows that religious participation has impacted positive emotions about marriage (Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Likewise, research does not deny that religious and spiritual involvement provides a barrier to negative behavior outcome for marriages, thus effecting happiness and contentment (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Thus, one can deduce that marital satisfaction does affect the well-being of individuals and families, including married couples, but it has several components.

Over the last 20 years, researchers have focused their attention on two important components that have implications on marital relationship. The discussions have been, on the one hand, about the factors that focused primarily on the characteristics of the individuals (personality, attributions and affect), and on the other hand, the dynamics of the relationships (communication, sexual satisfaction and couple conflict).

Individual Factors

The research on individual factors (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Fitzpatrick & Sollie, 1999; Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994; Neff & Karney, 2005; Thomas, Fletcher, & Lange, 1997) supports the position that the characteristics of individuals play a significant role in understanding the complexities of factors that impact marital satisfaction. For example, Zentner's (2005) research showed that the two most

important individual factors directly related to marital satisfaction are similarity in agreeableness and openness to experience. Similarly, the pre-conception a couple holds (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002) regarding the relationship and whether that pre-conception fulfills the other expectations were, in some ways, related to marital quality.

In addition, it is maintained by researchers that the dynamics of the relationship—that is, communication, sexual satisfaction, and couple conflict—are important factors that impact marital satisfaction. However, during the last decade, researchers have examined how these factors contribute to marital satisfaction (Gottman, Ryan, Swanson, & Swanson, 2005; Previti & Amato, 2003). These researchers were particularly interested in how relationship dynamics contribute to marital satisfaction.

Couple Communication

Couple communication is an important relationship dynamic that impacts marital satisfaction within any context, especially multicultural. When analyzed, couple communication is consistently and significantly related to couple satisfaction (Carrère & Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Markman, 1979, 1981; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999). Marital therapists (Craddock, 1980; Olson, 1979) and marital researchers (Gottman, 1979; McNamara & Bahr, 1980; Noller, 1980; Peterson, 1968; Raush, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974) agree that difficulty in communication is a crucial aspect of marital dissatisfaction. These studies have shown that unhappy couples tend to lack the skills inhibiting their ability to communicate effectively, thus contributing to marital dissatisfaction. It is also suggested that couples who suffer from a skills deficit in regulating their emotional expressions and successfully communicating tend to become defensive or to withdraw from a conflict situation, thus predicting later

marital dissatisfaction or dissolution. Nonetheless, researchers have identified effective communication as a key component to marital satisfaction (Carrère & Gottman, 1999). Similarly, when considering marital outcomes in newlyweds, marital communication has been shown to be a salient predictor by prominent researchers (Carrère, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Rogge and Bradbury, 1999; Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engle, and Thurmaier, 2006).

Moreover, self-disclosure is an important relationship dynamics that is directly related to marital satisfaction. Boland and Follingstad (1987) examined the relationship between communication and marital satisfaction, indicating that couples with high self-disclosure (the ability to disclose emotions to the other in a direct way and to listen to the other's experience) and communication, along with acts of love, support, and affection experienced greater marital satisfaction. On the contrary, couples who suffer from a skills deficit resulted in poor conflict resolution. Johnson (2003) asserts that secure adults tend to engage in more self-disclosure and direct communication than insecure adults do because they are confident enough to be assertive and trust that their partner will respond supportively. However, insecure adults are more likely to cling, make demands, stonewall, or withdraw because they believe their partner will reject them or they are protesting the unresponsiveness of their partner.

Couple Sexual Relationship

It can be noted that communication is not an exclusive or sole determinant of marital satisfaction as couple happiness may also be affected by other factors within the marital context. One vital component that might contribute to a happy marriage is satisfaction with the sexual relationship. Over the years researchers have shown that

satisfaction with sexual aspects of the relationship indeed plays a significant role in the overall relationship satisfaction of married couples (Apt, Hurlbert, Pierce, & White, 1996; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Donnelly, 1993; Fields, 1983; Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993; Young, Denny, Luquis, & Young, 1998; Young, Denny, Young, & Luquis, 2000). Studies have also demonstrated that couples rated sexual satisfaction as one of the most important components of marital happiness and functioning (Fields, 1983; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Kumar, 1986; Trudel, 2002). Similarly, Morokoff and Gilliland (1993) found sexual satisfaction, perception of spouse's sexual satisfaction, and frequency of sexual intercourse to be positively associated with marital satisfaction. Conversely, researchers have demonstrated that among factors most highly related to sexual satisfaction, marital satisfaction is among the most important contributors (Perlman & Abramson, 1982; Young et al., 1998, 2000).

Research has shown that there is a link between marital communication and sexual satisfaction. In a longitudinal study, Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley and Clements (1993) found that sexual satisfaction improved as a result of PREP (Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program), a primarily communication skills-based program that has a minimal dialogue or conversation of the couple's sexual relationship. It is clear from these results that when couples improve their communication skills and learn to communicate better, their sex lives improve, demonstrating a link between sexual satisfaction and marital communication. Communication, therefore, according to Pietromonaco, Greenwood, and Barrett, (2004), is a vehicle for fostering intimacy and trust in relationships due to the partner's feeling understood and accepted.

Couple Marital Conflict

The final component of relationship dynamics and marital satisfaction relates to a description of marital conflict in the context of multicultural couples. A multicultural marriage could be described as a marriage between a man and a woman whose culture, ethnicity, or racial group is different. Since the dynamics between communication and emotional expression in a multicultural relationship is different from culture to culture, great care should be taken in exploring ethnic diversity. For example, a Liberian or a Jamaican couple's style of conflict resolution may be different from that of British or American conflict resolution. Therefore, it is important to understand the significance and role of ethnicity and culture in influencing marital satisfaction and couple conflict. Research suggests that multicultural couples and their cultural differences do contribute to marital conflict (Bhugra & DeSilva, 2000; Crohn, 1998; Dalmage, 2000; Heller & Wood, 2007; Hsu, 2001; McFadden & Moore, 2001; Molina, Estrada, & Burnett, 2004; Root, 2001; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005).

Gender-based Role Expectation

One issue that impacts multicultural couples' relationships and breeds marital conflict is gender-based role expectations for men and women (Frame, 2004). Gender issues become especially complicated when the couples' cultural differences are great and each couple has a strong and contradictory belief about appropriate gender roles. Prominent conflicts arise when the woman has an egalitarian view of marriage and her husband, a male-dominated one (Frame, 2004). The conflict is even more intense if the couples live in a place where the gender role expectations are defined and strict (Romano, 2001). In the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, for example, students from

various parts of Africa or the Caribbean often marry someone who was born in the United Kingdom. As the case might be, people from Africa or the Caribbean often hold strong male-driven dominated roles, whereas people born in the United Kingdom may have an egalitarian view of marriage. Over the last few years, there has been a gradual but consistent shift from the hierarchical to a more egalitarian role among married couples (Glass, 1992). Recent research findings show that egalitarian relationships experience positive outcomes for both couples, including higher intimacy and relationship satisfaction and conversely experiencing less depression (Steil & Hay, 1997). These two gender role differences may often give rise to frustration and emotional distance resulting in tension.

Financial Management

Another area in multicultural marriages that may create notable marital conflict is finance management. Studies reveal that finances have a large impact on couple satisfaction and are frequently the cause of marital conflict. Olson and DeFraim (2000) found that 37 percent of all married couples in their study indicated that the number one problem in their marriage was money. Financial challenges can involve not having enough money and not agreeing on how to manage it (Ho, 1990; White & Rogers, 2000). In addition, studies reveal that stress caused by economic factors such as unemployment is frequently accompanied by increased hostility, which, in turn, leads to marital dissatisfaction and instability (Conger et al., 1990). Moreover, when married couples hail from culturally different families, they frequently have diverse beliefs about who should make the money or who should spend it and under what circumstances (Negy & Synder, 2000). For example, in some cultures, it is the husband who is expected to work and be

the breadwinner as well as the one who makes the financial decisions (Garcia-Preto, 1996; Romano, 2001). Financial management can also become the point of conflict in some African or Caribbean marital relationships. For example, a Caribbean or African spouse may still have obligations and responsibilities to the family back home. Such obligations may require that the spouse send money back home each month to support the extended family. For the spouse who is born in the United Kingdom or abroad, such responsibilities may result in marital conflict, especially when the family is not a high-income earner (Durodoye & Coker, 2008).

Language and Communication

Similarly, intercultural marriages are impacted by language and communication. Couples marrying from different cultural backgrounds may have marital conflict because cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs are transmitted through verbal and nonverbal communication (Durodoye & Coker, 2008). Frame (2004) believes more subtle communication problems may be related to nonverbal communication such as tone of voice, eye contact, and gestures. One barrier in couple communication is the belief that a person can be both a mind reader and an accurate interpreter of what is said. Researchers have found that although people may spend 50-80 percent of their time listening, they hear only half of what is said, understand about one fourth of what they hear, and remember less than that (Romano, 2001). The point to note is that these marital challenges are exacerbated by cultural differences (Frame, 2004).

Parenting Styles

Finally, multicultural marriages may also have conflict experiences as a result of parenting styles based on cultural differences. Durodoye and Coker (2008) argued that child rearing might breed conflict when one individual struggles to control and perpetuate his/her own cultural traditions through his/her parenting. This is because most individuals rely on the parenting styles they experienced themselves as children and these approaches may be quite different and conflicting (Perel, 2000). Issues concerning discipline may also become the focal point for unresolved differences in philosophy, values, or beliefs the other may hold (Perel, 2000). Couples in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church who experience marital conflict as a result of child-rearing issues should be encouraged and motivated to identify a solution-based approach to these differences.

Marital Satisfaction and Interventions

The question has been asked, “What works in treating marital distress?” Evidence based on research conducted on marriage enrichment (Accordino & Guerney, 2003) provides understanding associated with improving and strengthening marriage.

Relationship Enhancement (RE)

During the mid 1970s, Bernard Guerney (1977) developed the Relationship Enhancement (RE) for couples and family. The program is a skill-based program and can be used with married couples as well as engaged couples (Bowling, Hill & Jencius, 2005). RE has assisted couples with strengthening intimate relationships while, at the same time, maintaining the quality of intimacy over time. RE’s main goal is to build “empathy.” This is done through teaching a set of nine skills that accentuate

communicating effectively, responding empathically, resolving conflicts in a mutually satisfying manner, and finding ways to break out of negative cycles and implement more constructive behaviors (Guerney & Mason, 1990).

Several studies have analyzed the impact of RE programs for couples. Ridley and Bain (1983) examined RE by looking at self-disclosure in an RE treatment group versus a control group in relationship discussion. Findings reveal that participants in the RE treatment group had significantly higher scores in self-disclosure than those in the control group. In addition, Ridley and Sladeczek (1992) looked at the effect RE had on the need for control, expressed affection, and wanted affection. This study revealed that those in the treatment group had significant improvement in identifying their needs for control, expressed affection, and wanted affection.

G. R. Greene (1986) evaluated the effect of RE on couples' marital communication and self-esteem. The study was comprised of 14 couples in the RE treatment group and 18 couples in a waiting list comparison group. When comparing pre-test with post-test results, the RE treatment group showed higher levels of marital communication when compared with the control group. Considering the positive impact of RE on premarital and married couples, it would be useful to include it in the selection of marriage education programs for the inner city church this study is targeting.

RE has also been used to examine the extent to which it has affected participants' interpersonal communication between mother and daughter. Even though these findings are old, they are useful in that they show RE can be applied to a wider population. Guerney, Vogelsson, and Coufal (1983) conducted a study in which one group received training in RE skills, while the other group received training in general communication

skills and problem solving. The findings revealed that the RE group made significant gains, whereas the traditional group made only modest gains in the same period.

Premarital Relationship Enhancement and Prevention (PREP)

Another program that has been used to assist couples in distressed relationships is the Premarital Relationship Enhancement and Prevention (PREP). It is a cognitive behavioral skill training program that features 12- to 24-hour mini-lectures, discussion, and interpersonal skill training on weeknights or on the weekend (Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995). The primary focus of PREP is to help couples avoid the potentially damaging effects of conflict while, at the same time, enhancing positive and protective factors in the relationship. A number of studies have been conducted using PREP. Markman, Floyd, Stanley, and Storaasli (1988) examined the effect of PREP on communication conflict resolutions skills in couples. The findings indicated that the participants demonstrated higher levels of positive communication and lower levels of negative communication than the control group. Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, and Clements (1993) found in a follow-up research study that the level of communication skills acquired had increased more consistently than the control group. Moreover, it was revealed that the treatment group had lower levels of marital violence.

Another study using PREP yielded similar results in terms of communication skills (Schilling, Baucom, Burnett, Allen, & Ragland, 2003). The purpose of the study was to determine whether participation using PREP resulted in expected communication skills and whether the program could predict future marital satisfaction. At the end of the study, it was revealed that PREP improved satisfactory marital communication behaviors and possibly prevented future marital disillusionment and distress (Schilling et al., 2003).

Renick, Blumberg, and Markman (1992) found that PREP was more effective in building communication, problem solving, and support/validation at two months post-interventions. Husbands who participated gained more than wives in communication and problem-solving skills. One of the weaknesses of the couples at the inner city church is the ability to deal with conflict in a positive way. This intervention may yield a great impact on those distressed couples. Similarly, research by Markman and Hahlweg (1993) and Behrens, Sanders, and Halford (1990) revealed that PREP programs produced significant gains in communication and conflict management and were satisfactory at post-test.

Marital Satisfaction: Impact of Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Customs

Early studies of multicultural couples asserted that intercultural couples are inherently more unstable (Brayboy, 1966; Burma, 1952; Freeman, 1955; Heer, 1966; Lieberman, 1966; Pavela, 1964; Portorfield, 1978). According to Hsu (2001), multicultural couples present a greater likelihood of encountering problems because they hold values, beliefs, attitudes, and habits that are more diverse than couples who are from similar cultures. However, Leslie and Letiecq (2004) asserted that the literature lacks consensus on whether or not these couples experience a lesser degree of marital satisfaction than same-ethnicity couples.

Furthermore, Waldman and Rubalcava (2005) affirmed that the potential for misunderstanding was significantly increased for multicultural couples, thus resulting in decreased marital satisfaction.

Similarly, research shows that profound differences in cultural values and worldviews can propel multicultural couples into distress and result in decreased marital satisfaction (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000; Falicov, 1995; Garcia, 2006; Hsu, 2001; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005). In the same way, difficulties or differences in values, beliefs, and customs (Bhugra & Desilva, 2000) and especially distinct communication styles (McGoldrick, 1999; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005) may distress and undermine marital satisfaction and make the relationship less satisfying and unstable (Chan & Wethington, 1998). Although some studies have highlighted the culturally related difficulties in multicultural relationships, findings have viewed multicultural relationships as positive and enriching interactions in which each partner can learn from each other and discuss cultural difficulties through appreciation and humor (Heller & Wood, 2007; Romano, 2001). Multicultural couples can Endeavour to explore and negotiate differences in ways that enrich and strengthen their marriages, thus leading to greater understanding and awareness (Heller & Wood, 2007).

Measuring marital satisfaction has been the most frequently researched variable in the marriage and family field (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). As seen in the literature, marital satisfaction has been an important factor as researchers have moved from one-dimensional to multi-dimensional measures in order to grasp a fuller and clearer understanding of the complexities of marital satisfaction. According to Sabatelli (1988), the early measures of marital satisfaction before and during the 1980s focused on two- or three-item scales.

Measuring Marital Satisfaction

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) measures the level of satisfaction in

a marriage using a brief assessment that utilizes three items. Even though the KMS scale has been reliable, it demonstrates one-dimensional measures, thus limiting and distorting findings regarding the multi-dimensionality of marital satisfaction measurements.

Another multi-dimensional tool used by researchers is the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1979). This self-reporting instrument measures each partner's assessment using 11 relationship domains: Conventionalization, global distress, affection communication, problem-solving communication, time together, financial disagreement, dissatisfaction about sex, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children, and conflict over childrearing.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is widely used and well validated in assessing marital adjustment. The DAS is a 32-item scale that can be used with married couples. This inventory has four sub-scales: Affection expression, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and dyadic satisfaction.

The ENRICH Marital Inventory (Olson & Olson, 1999; Olson, Fournier & Druckman, 1987), a multidimensional instrument, was designed to measure and identify relationship strengths and weaknesses. The inventory was initially developed in 1987 for married couples that sought marriage counseling or marriage enrichment. This instrument assesses the following domains: Personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and spiritual beliefs.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to highlight knowledge regarding marital satisfaction as it relates to multicultural married couples. Early research shows two factors influenced marital satisfaction. First, individual factors of personality,

attribution, and affect play a significant role in understanding how internal factors influence marital satisfaction. Second, the dynamics of the relationship, that is, communication, sexual satisfaction, and couple resolution, may also influence marital satisfaction. However, more recent literature reveals that marital satisfaction is influenced by multidimensional factors such as personality (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997), communication (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Miller & Kannae, 1999), leisure (Orthner & Mancini, 1990); conflict resolution (Canary & Messman, 2000; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Gottman & Notarius, 2000); sexual relationships (McCabe & Cobain, 1998; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000); extended family (Bhugra & DeSilva, 2000); children and parenting (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Johnson & Huston, 1998); religious practices (Horowitz, 1999); acculturation (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000); and financial management (Voydanoff, 1990).

This study seeks to use the Four ENRICH Marital Inventory Scales to measure the strengths and weaknesses of married couples of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, a multicultural congregation. Even though these scales have not been adapted for and validated within ethnically diverse populations, it is correct to assert that they will provide a context to explore differences and similarities.

The Four ENRICH Scales that researchers have expressed most interest in and that form the basis for this study are marital satisfaction, marital communication, conflict resolution, and idealistic distortion. These scales are specifically designed for married couples' research; each contains ten items, which seek to assess each of the problem areas in marital relationships.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study, giving particular attention to the measure, the instrument, the sample, and the administration of the inventory.

The Measure

Brief Background of ENRICH

The ENRICH (Evaluating & Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication, Happiness) couple inventory was used in this study to assess problem areas and assist married couples in enriching their relationships. Developed in the '70s (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987), ENRICH has its foundation in ecological system theories (Lavee & Olson, 1993) and was specifically designed as a sound multi-dimensional inventory to assess the dimensions of relationships. It has been shown to be both theoretically and empirically based (Olson, 1998) with good psychometric properties.

Empirical Validity and Reliability

Empirically, ENRICH has gleaned substantial support (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Johnson & Booth, 1998; Karney & Bradbury, 1995) and has universal consensus ranging from scholars and therapists (Huston, 2000; Levenson & Gottman, 1985; Veroff, Douvan, & Hatchett, 1995) as a result of its ecosystemic perspective in the assessment of

relationship satisfaction. The scale is useful for assessing multicultural marital satisfaction, since central to its usefulness is bringing together all of the interacting factors that affect marital relationship satisfaction.

The validity, consistency, and reliability of the ENRICH scales, as well as the content and construct have been substantiated (Lavee & Oslon, 1993).

It has been shown that ENRICH can discriminate between happily married and unhappily married couples with about 90 percent accuracy (Flowers & Olson, 1989). Moreover, researchers who used ENRICH have been able to use discriminate analysis of its multi-dimensional scales, thus identifying the ten top strengths of happy marriages and to discriminate between happy and unhappy marriages with 93 percent accuracy (Olson & Olson, 2000). Consequently, intercultural couples at the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist church would benefit immensely from a tool that assesses their marital challenges by taking into consideration all factors impacting their relationships.

Universally, ENRICH scales have been used in many countries around the world, including Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South America, Sweden, and Taiwan (Garrett, 2004). However, one must be aware that this tool has been predominantly tested on couples that may not be multicultural or intercultural exclusively; thus, care should be taken when applying it in such a setting. It must be pointed out that in the experience of the researcher, nonetheless, marital conflict, irrespective of its location—whether in Africa or South America, England or China—will always be a marital conflict. The only things that change are the story lines of each individual; marital conflict will always be a conflict.

The Instruments

Description of the Four ENRICH Scales Used in This Study

The ENRICH Couple Inventory, which contains 20 scales, was originally designed for both clinical use and research (Flowers & Olson, 1989). However, researchers have expressed most interest in four of the ENRICH scales: Marital satisfaction, marital communication, conflict resolution, and idealistic distortion (used only for couple research). These four scales were used in this study to assess problem areas. Each scale contains ten items with the exception of the idealistic distortion that contains six items. A description of these scales according to ENRICH follows.

Marital Satisfaction Scale

Marital satisfaction is a multidimensional scale that surveys ten areas of the couple's marriage and measures how satisfied or unsatisfied a person is with his or her couple relationship. These areas include the major categories in ENRICH, i.e., personality, role responsibilities, communication, conflict resolution, financial concerns, management of leisure time, sexual relationship, parental responsibilities, relationships with family and friends, and religious orientation.

Couple Communication

Couple communication is a scale concerned with an individual's feelings, beliefs, and attitudes toward communication in his or her relationship. The items focus on the level of comfort felt by both partners in being able to share important emotions and beliefs with each other, the perception of a partner's way of giving and receiving

information, and the respondent's perception of how adequately she or he communicates with the other.

Conflict Communication

The conflict resolution scale assesses an individual's attitudes, feelings, and beliefs toward the existence and resolution of conflict in his or her relationship. The items focus on the openness of couples to recognize and resolve issues, strategies, and procedures used to end arguments, and satisfaction with how problems are resolved.

Idealistic Distortion

Idealistic distortion is the scale used to measure the tendency of couples to answer questions in a socially desirable manner and is used to revise individual scale scores to correct for this bias.

The Subject and Sample Size

The participants in this study are married couples who are male and female from the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, a multicultural community who took the ENRICH Inventory in April 2011. The married couples aged 18 and older were inclusive of all ethnic and racial background. The majority of the subjects had at least some college education and virtually all had finished secondary school. All of the subjects had been married for not less than six months. The sample size was 36 married couples.

Scoring Procedure

Each couple responded to 35 statements. Each item is preceded by a positive sign

“+” or a negative sign “-.” For the items preceded by a positive sign, the responses are not changed, that is, a 1 remains a 1. For the items that are preceded by a negative sign “-,” the responses should be reversed. That is, a 1 becomes a 5, and a 2 becomes a 4, and a 4 becomes a 2, and a 5 becomes a 1. A response of 3 is left unchanged. The item responses are then totaled for each subscale. The total raw score is obtained by adding individual responses. ENRICH scales are scored independently, allowing researchers the option to include or exclude any item on the scale.

Administration of Inventory

Permission to Do Research

Prior to undertaking this study, the researcher sought permission for research involving human subjects from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher also obtained permission from the President of the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United Kingdom to carry out research with the Conference, particularly the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church. Permission was also granted from Live Innovation, Inc. to use the ENRICH scales for the purpose of research.

Procedures to Administer Inventory

The ENRICH scales were administered to married couples to assess problem areas. Each couple responded to 35 statements. The responses are listed on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 is disagree strongly; 2 is disagree; 3 is undecided; 4 is agree and 5 is agree strongly). The spouses are reminded that this is not a test with right or wrong answers, but an inventory that helps couples discover their relationship strengths and possible

growth areas to work on. The inventory must be taken alone without consulting with each other. Each completed inventory will be placed in an envelope and sealed. Both couples will place their completed inventories in another envelope and seal it. The sealed envelope was deposited in a box at the front of the room. The completed inventories are kept in a safe place. The participants received no reward for participating and were not misled as to their involvement in this study. Testing is completely confidential with the results kept in a safe place for four years.

In summary, the ENRICH inventory was selected as a research tool because of its ability to evaluate marital satisfaction, as well as evaluate the couples' problem and strengths areas. This current research is aimed at making a difference in recognizing and evaluating what is going on among the multicultural married couples of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Church. It is hoped that future research and programs on marriage enrichment for multicultural families will use the findings of this study as an introduction in preparing marriage enrichment seminars for intercultural married couples in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church district.

Description of the Empowering Couple Seminars

The Empowering Couples Seminars are marriage enrichment intervention program specifically formulated with the flexibility to use biblical or theological integration in the materials; and also to assist couples in developing skills and attitudes that will strengthen and support their marital relationships. This tool contains all the components necessary for an effective couple enrichment program. Firstly, it provides insight into dynamics of the couple's relationship by facilitating meaningful discussion and dialogue. Secondly, it gives particularly attention to both couple strengths and growth

areas for each content area. Thirdly, it focuses on skill building in couple communication and conflict resolution that are the most important relationship areas this project will give attention to. Also, it addresses key relationship issues for each couple including such areas as: *role relationship, finance, children and parenting and spiritual beliefs*. Finally, this marriage enrichment tool gives invaluable information and insight into family of origin and its relationship to couple relationship.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to develop a program that will strengthen and support the marriage relationship of the multicultural community of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, London. The ENRICH couples scales was used to assess the marital satisfaction of these couples. Further, the study seeks to identify the growth or problem areas.

Thirty-six individuals (eighteen couples) participated in this survey that utilized the results of ENRICH questionnaires. The participants were married couples, male and female, from the ages of eighteen and up. Ethnically, this was a multicultural community, meaning that the couples are all from various ethnic backgrounds. Each couple participated in the study as the direct result of an invitation from the principal researcher. To recruit subjects, announcements were placed in bulletins and on the bulletin boards of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church. A follow-up was made with an oral presentation to promote the study and to invite participations to attend. The participants were reminded that the ENRICH survey was not a test with right or wrong answers, but an inventory that assists couples to discover their relationship strengths and possible growth areas to work on. The ENRICH inventory measures individual or dyadic responses to questions regarding marital satisfaction across multiple domains. The aim of the ENRICH survey was to assess married couples in order to discover the areas of their

relationship that were strong and those areas which were possible growth areas in order to determine what steps can be taken to address those challenging marital needs. The global picture below describes the marital satisfaction of this multicultural community before any treatment was administered.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital Satisfaction, according to ENRICH, can be described as the evaluated status of the marital relationship of a couple in ten areas of the couple's life: communication, conflict resolution, personality issues, role relationship, financial concerns, leisure time, sexual relationship, parenting, family and friends, and religion.

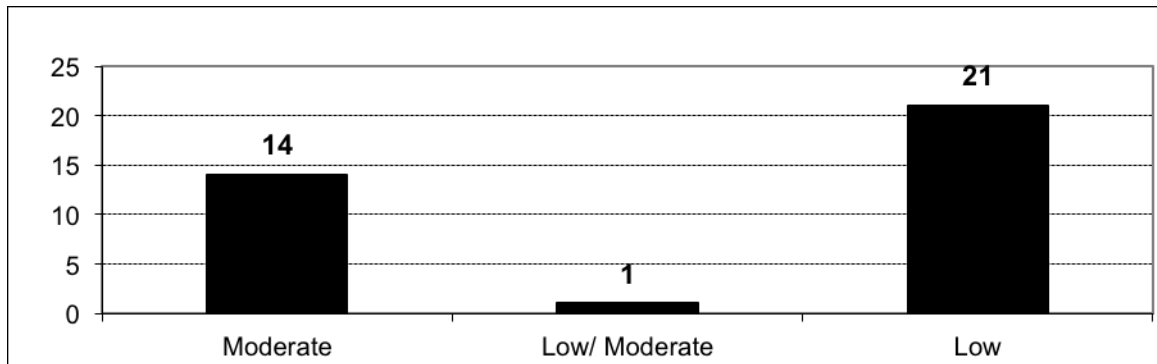
A very high score (85 to 100) would reflect that the couples are very satisfied and really enjoy most aspects of their couple relationship. A high score (65 to 85) would reflect satisfaction with most aspects of the couple relationship. A moderate score (40 to 60) would indicate that the couples are somewhat satisfied and enjoy some aspects of their couple relationship. A low score (20 to 35) would say that the couples are somewhat dissatisfied and have some concerns about their couple relationship. A very low score (0 to 15) would show that the couples are very dissatisfied and are concerned about their couple relationship.

According to Illustration 1, 22 individuals indicated low to moderate marital satisfaction and 14 individuals described their marital satisfaction status as moderate. What these individuals are saying about their marital satisfaction is that they are somewhat dissatisfied and have some concerns about their marital relationship. The 14 individuals are indicating that they are somewhat satisfied and enjoy some aspects of their couple relationship. Of the 10 items on the marital satisfaction scale, Q9, "I am

happy with how we share our responsibilities in our household”, has the highest pre seminar mean of 4.00 with Standard Deviation 1.10 (see Appendix E).

Illustration 1

Marital Satisfaction



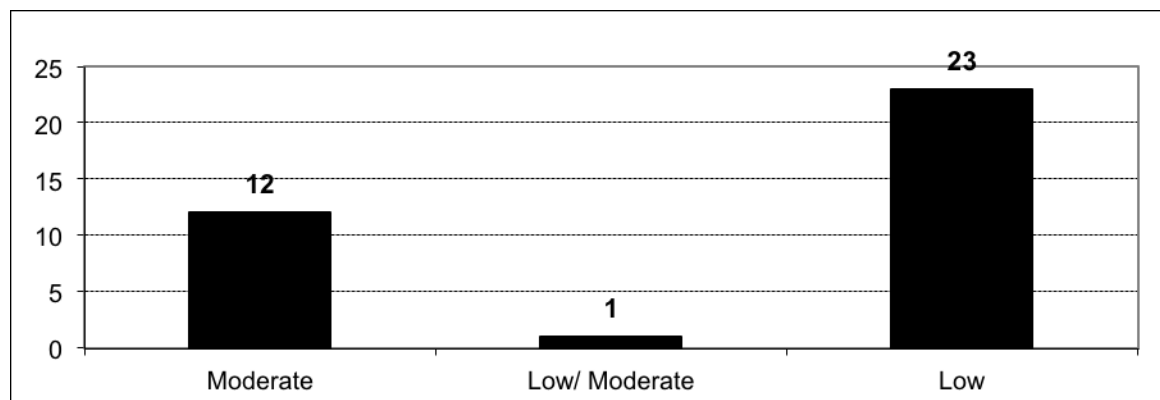
Couple Communication Before Seminar

This communication subscale measures an individual’s feelings and attitude toward communication in his or her relationship. Items focus on the level of comfort felt by the partner in sharing and receiving emotional and cognitive information. A very high score (85 to 100) indicates that the couples feel very positive about the quality and quantity of their couple communication. A high score (65 to 80) means that the couples feel good about their communication and have few concerns. A moderate score (40 to 60) says that the couples feel generally good about their communication, but have some concerns. A low score (20 to 35) indicates that the couples have several concerns about the quality of their communication. A very long score (0 to 15) will show that the couples have many concerns about the quality of their couple communication. According to the survey (Illustration 2), 24 individuals scored low in communication satisfaction, while 12

scored moderate. Very low was classified as low since there are very few of them. 24 individuals indicated that they have several concerns about the quality of their couple communication, while 12 individuals are saying that they feel generally good about their couple communication, but have some concerns relating to the quality of their couple communication. Of the ten items on the communication scale Q2, “I can express my true feelings to my partner”, has the highest pre seminar mean 3.89, Standard Deviation 1.12.

Illustration 2

Couple Communication



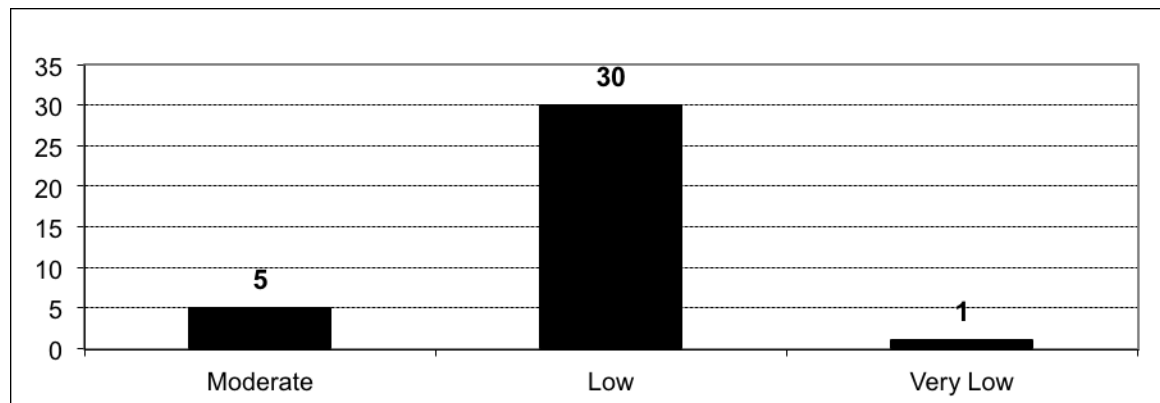
Conflict Resolution

The couple conflict resolution scale assesses the couple's perception of the existence and resolution of conflict in the relationship. Items focus on the openness of the couples to recognize and resolve issues and strategies used to end arguments. A very high score (85 to 100) means that the couples feel they can very effectively discuss and resolve differences with each other. A high score (65 to 80) indicates that an individual feels he or she can effectively discuss and resolve differences with the other spouse. A moderate score (40 to 60) suggests that an individual feels he or she can usually discuss

and resolve differences with the other spouse. A low score (20 to 35) shows that a couple often has difficulty discussing and resolving differences. A very low score (0 to 15) means a couple has great difficulty discussing and resolving differences. Thus, the couple's marital survey (Illustration 3) showed that five individuals scored moderate. 30 individuals scored low and one scored very low. On the conflict resolution scale the single item with the highest pre seminar mean is Q15, "Even during disagreements, I can share my true feelings and ideas with my partner," with pre seminar mean 3.50 and Standard Deviation 1.18. These two groups are showing signs that either they often have difficulty discussing and resolving differences or they have great difficulty in resolving their couples' difficulties. Another item Q32, "To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing". The pre seminar mean was 3.03 and Standard Deviation 1.30. The overall perception suggest that marital conflict according to these findings can influence marital satisfaction in the case of the multicultural couples at the Milton Keynes Church.

Illustration 3

Conflict Resolution



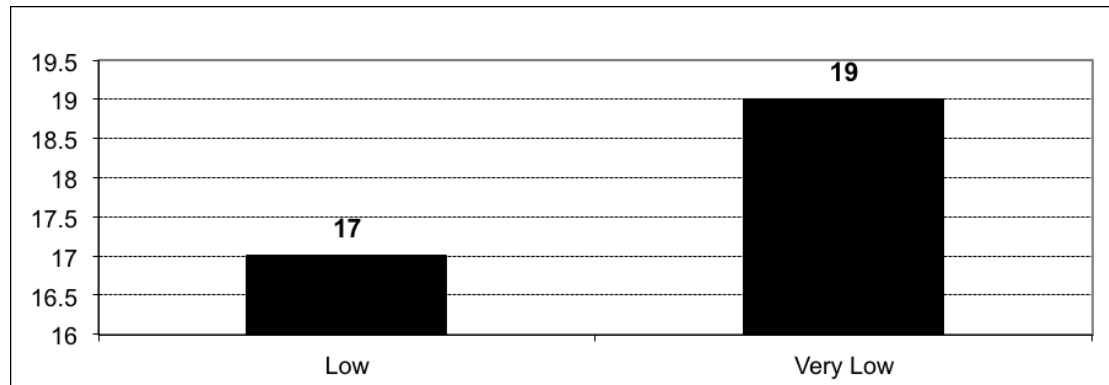
Idealistic Distortion

The idealistic distortion scale measures the tendency of some individuals to report their desired status of marriage through “rose-colored glasses,” rather than the actual experience. Consequently, this scale adjusts the bias measuring the effect of the social desirability of the respondents. It assesses the tendency of a couple to respond to personal questions in a socially desirable manner to make an item appear as the couple desired and not as it actually was. A very high score (85 to 100) indicated that the couple is very unrealistic about the relationship and tends to deny or minimize problems. A high score (65 to 80) meant that the couple is often unrealistic about the relationship and tends to deny or minimize problems. A moderate score (40 to 60) indicated that the couple is somewhat realistic about the relationship, but sometimes denies or minimizes problems. A low score (20 to 35) showed that the couple is generally realistic about the relationship and more open to admitting limitations or problems. A very low score (0 to 15) indicated that the couple is very realistic and open to admitting limitations or problems in the relationship. According to the ENRICH survey (Illustration 4), 17 individuals scored low

while 19 individuals scored very low. This indicates that these individuals are very realistic and open to admitting problems and limitations in their marriages.

Illustration 4

Idealistic Distortion



What, then, are the findings of the ENRICH survey? It is important to note that the purpose of this initial ENRICH survey was to identify specific problem areas, then focus on those specific couple problem areas through marriage enrichment seminars. Thereafter, to administer the same survey to the same core group which is consistent to assess whether the marriage enrichment seminars have had any impact. As a result of the low scores, the findings of the survey indicated a need to address special areas of the relationships in these areas, namely, marital satisfaction, couple communication, and couple conflict resolution. Idealistic distortion will assess the tendency of the couples to give an unrealistic or a realistic picture of the relationship.

Further, another way to assess marital needs based on ENRICH is to identify the various types of couples. Olson and Flowers (1993) summarized the various types of couples as vitalized couples, harmonious couples, traditional couples, conflicted couples,

and devitalized couples. Two of these couple types are important to this study because they described the types of couples in this study based on their scores in the survey and also assisted in identifying the couples' marital needs. On the one hand, the conflicted couples are unhappy and have numerous growth areas and few relationship strengths. They are called conflicted since they disagree in many areas and have low scores on the communication and conflict resolution domains, as well as many others. On the other hand, the devitalized couples are very unhappy and have growth areas in almost all aspects of their relationships. They are typically very unhappy and have little strength as a couple.

Both conflicted and devitalized couples are the two types that most often seek marital therapy and also couple enrichment programs. Accordingly, research has shown that multicultural couples, compared to other types of couples, are more likely to have marital challenges (Fu, Tora & Kendall, 2001; Hsu, 2001; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005).

Startling Findings

The most startling result was to discover that many couples scored poorly on the ENRICH questionnaire, thus identifying them as either devitalized or conflicted couples. Similarly, another finding is the absence of any high scores on the ENRICH survey to reflect vitalized couples or couples who are happy in their marital relationship. This result confirmed the hearsay that the church had a great need for a marriage enrichment program. It could be, perhaps, that other multicultural churches in the London area have similar needs.

In summary, this study identified three problematic areas: Marital satisfaction, couple communication, and couple conflict resolution. In addition, based on the scores of

the survey, this study has identified two types of couples: Conflicted couples and devitalized couples.

Impact of Empowering Couple's Seminars for Married Couples

Based on the results of the ENRICH survey, the Empowering couples Seminars (see appendix) were contextualized into 10 one-hour, thirty-minute seminars and presented over 10 weeks. The seminars were conducted and facilitated by the Principal Researcher at the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Church hall during the month of April 2011. The following topics were taught: Session 1, Sharing strengths and growth areas; Session 2, Communication; Session 3, Conflict Resolution; Session 4, Financial Management; Session 5, Role Relationship; Session 6, Spiritual Beliefs; Session 7, Sexual Relationship; Session 8, Children & Parenting; Session 9, Cultural/Ethnic Issues; Session 10, Personal, Couple and family goals.

The goals of the seminars were to help couples identify, build, and increase their relationship strengths. The program also encouraged the couples to learn how to overcome issues and problems through empowerment. It provides two essential components to learning. First, it provides insight. Insight answers the question “why.” Why should couples practice and learn assertiveness in communication? Couples need to be aware of the end results of their actions and the benefits of those actions. It gives a descriptive picture of how happy couples differ from unhappy couples. Second, the program provides couples with the skill-building capacity and know-how enabling couples to appreciate and advocate positive behavior change. To conform to the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) and to protect and sustain harmonious

relationships and trust among the church members, both questionnaires (pre- and post-seminars) were anonymous.

The ENRICH questionnaire given at the pre seminar was administered again to the same core participants after the Empowering couples seminars. The same participants who took the first survey also took the post-survey. The participants were reminded that the survey was not a test with right or wrong answers, but an inventory that assists couples with identifying their relationship strengths and possible growth areas to work on. The participants were instructed to read the instruments and take the test independently without discussing the items with their spouse. After completing the questionnaire, participants placed the completed questionnaires in a sealed envelope and deposited them in a box at the front of the hall. Each couple responded to 35 statements. Each item is preceded by a positive sign “+” or a negative sign “-.” For the items preceded by a positive sign, the responses are not changed, that is, a 1 remains a 1. For the items that are preceded by a negative sign, the responses should be reversed. That is, a 1 becomes a 5, and a 2 becomes a 4, and a 4 becomes a 2, and a 5 becomes a 1. A response of 3 is left unchanged. The item responses are then totaled for each subscale. The total raw score is obtained by adding individual responses.

The following is a summary description of the ENRICH survey administered after the Empowering couples seminars and the difference before and after the seminars (see Illustration 5).

Illustration 5

Summary of the Survey

Before Seminar		After Seminar		Difference before and after seminar	
Marital Satisfaction	Total	Marital Satisfaction	Total	Marital Satisfaction	Difference
Very High	0	Very High	2	Very High	2
High	0	High	6	High	6
Moderate	14	Moderate	16	Moderate	2
Low	22	Low	4	Low	(18)
Very Low	0	Very Low	1	Very Low	1
<hr/>					
Communication	Total	Communication	Total	Communication	Difference
Very High	0	Very High	4	Very High	4
High	0	High	9	High	9
Moderate	12	Moderate	9	Moderate	(3)
Low	24	Low	6	Low	(18)
Very Low	0	Very Low	1	Very Low	1
<hr/>					
Conflict Resolution	Total	Conflict Resolution	Total	Conflict Resolution	Difference
Very High	0	Very High	4	Very High	4
High	0	High	10	High	10
Moderate	5	Moderate	8	Moderate	3
Low	30	Low	5	Low	(25)
Very Low	1	Very Low	2	Very Low	1
<hr/>					
Idealistic Distortion	Total	Idealistic Distortion	Total	Idealistic Distortion	Difference
Very High	0	Very High	3	Very High	3
High	0	High	7	High	7
Moderate	0	Moderate	12	Moderate	12
Low	17	Low	7	Low	(10)
Very Low	19	Very Low	0	Very Low	(19)

Marital Satisfaction Post-Seminar

Couples who indicated low marital satisfaction indicated an improvement after taking the Empowering Couples Seminars. As indicated, (Illustration 5), before the Empowering Couples Seminars were taken, 22 individuals scored low levels indicating somewhat dissatisfied and have some concerns about their couple relationship. However, after the Empowering Couples Seminars were taken, only 4 individuals indicated low scores levels. The difference between before and after seminars is 18 individuals. Even though a decrease, but it has a positive effect because it shows the number of couples who have moved to one or two couple groups upwards. What this means is that, 18 individuals or 9 couples are saying they are either very satisfied and really enjoying most aspects of their relationship or somewhat satisfied and enjoying most or some aspects of their marital relationship.

Communication

Couples who indicated a low score in Couple Communication (Illustration 5) indicated an improvement after taking part in the Empowering Couples seminars as indicated by a decrease of low levels scores by 18 individuals or 9 couples. Before the Empowering Couples Seminars were taken, 24 individuals scored low levels on the ENRICH Inventory. However, after the seminars were taken, only 6 individuals indicated low scores levels. The difference between before and after seminars is 18 individuals. What this decrease means is that the 18 individuals or 9 couples are saying that there has been improvement to their marital communication because there has been a movement from nil score levels to high to very high levels suggesting improvement to marital satisfaction. Also, the 3 in parenthesis indicated a decrease moderate levels score.

Even though there is a decrease in the moderate score levels from 12 individuals to 9, there are movements to high to very high score levels indicating improvement to Couple Communication thus positively influencing marital satisfaction.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution had the lowest scores levels with thirty-one (31) individuals scoring low to very low before the Empowering Couples Seminars. After the seminars, respondents with low score dropped by twenty-five (25). It is important to note that before the Empowering Couples Seminars couples scores levels from moderate to very high were nil. However, there were movements after the Empowering Couples Seminars to high and very high scores levels indicating improvements to the way couples can effectively discuss and resolve differences in their couple relationship.

Idealistic Distortion

The increased idealistic distortion scores after the seminar may be an indication of an increased optimistic exuberance following the seminar. This increase in scores is likely to decline with time and to converge with reality after practicing the skills learned during the seminar and focusing on couples' strengths and abilities to navigate problems and obstacles. It is important to note that the numbers in parentheses (10) and (19) showed that there has been a decreased in Idealistic distortion. However, one can note the movements to one or two higher scores levels suggesting that the couples are beginning to adjust to the impact of the Empowering Couples Seminars.

In summary, what types of couples emerged after the seminar? It can be noted that before the seminar, conflicted and devitalized couples emerged. There was no

indication of a high or very high marital relationship. However, after the seminar, eight (8) couples indicated a high or very high score in their marital relationship. Almost half (14) of the couples also moved up to high or very high scores, thus demonstrating a move of one or two couple types.

Questions with a Relatively High Difference Between Pre- and Post-Seminars

Leisure Activities

One item in the ENRICH survey (see appendix E) asked respondents to react to the following statement: “I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.” Of the 10 items on the marital satisfaction subscale, the pre-seminar mean for this statement was 2.81 and post-seminar mean was 3.38. This item had a relatively high difference between pre-seminar and post-seminar. What this means is that there has been an increase in marital satisfaction, suggesting that there was an improvement in marital satisfaction for some of the couples.

Children and Parenting

One item on the marital satisfaction subscale is question Q27, “I am unhappy with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.” The pre-seminar mean was 3.53 and the post-seminar mean was 3.00. The difference between pre-seminar and post-seminar showed a decrease in the response. This statement is noted as a negative proposition. Thus, both couples need to unite in denying the presence of this negative influence that has the capacity to reduce marital satisfaction. Therefore, if the couples respond in the affirmative rather than in the negative, then they would be showing strength. The decrease in percentage change could be suggesting that the couples have

acquired skills to address the needs of their children. Future intervention in conflict resolution will be required here to assist couples in managing their marital challenges.

Communication

Another item asked respondents to react to the following statement, Q18, “At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want.” Observing the 10 items on the communication subscale, the pre seminar mean for this statement was 3.36 and the post-seminar mean was 3.90. This item showed a difference between pre-seminar and post-seminar. This indicates that couples have moved from a passive style of communication to assertive communication. Passive communication (Olson & Olson, 2000) is characterized by an unwillingness to honestly share thoughts, feelings, or desires. In contrast, assertive communication allows people to express themselves in a healthy, non-defensive, and non-insistent way. It would appear from the findings that couples have acquired the skill of self-disclosure toward each other, thus influencing marital satisfaction in a positive way.

Another item on the communication subscale was “I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.” The pre-seminar mean was 3.72 and the post-seminar mean was 3.31. This indicated that there is a difference from pre-seminar to post-seminar. There is a need for future intervention because of the possibility of the absence of a potentially strengthening feature.

Conflict Resolution

A further item with a relatively high difference between pre-seminar and post-seminar is statement Q23: “I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.” The

pre-seminar mean was 2.97 and 3.38 for the post-seminar mean on the Conflict Resolution subscale. The increase could account for the movement of some couples up to high and very high scores post-seminar. In other words, there were significant improvements in the area of conflict resolution as couples worked toward resolutions. There is a clear need in this area for future intervention.

Idealistic Distortion

Two items on the idealistic distortion subscale reflect the mood. Question 4 asks for a response to the following statement: “My partner and I understand each other completely.” The other item on this subscale is question 20 that asks respondents to respond to “My partner has all the qualities I’ve always wanted in a mate.” The pre-seminar mean was 3.42 and the post-seminar mean was 3.03 for question 4 (standard deviation pre/post seminar—1.13 and 0.944 respectively). There was a decrease in difference of -11.2. The pre-seminar mean for question 20 was 3.39 and post seminar, it was 3.3 (standard deviation pre/post seminars—1.42 and 1.149 respectively). There is certainly the realization of some kind of tension between these couples. One can suspect from a nonprofessional’s point of view that as a direct result of the decrease in percentage, it is possible to deny or maybe to minimize problem. Perhaps, more insight from a clinical psychologist or marriage therapist could account for this discovery. (See Illustration 6).

Illustration 6

Difference between pre seminar and post seminar

Q No	Questions with a relatively high difference between pre seminar and post seminar	Change	Difference
Q17	I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.	Increased by	20.5
Q18	At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want.	Increased by	9.9
Q23	I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.	Increased by	13.7
Q27	I am unhappy with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.	Decreased by	(15.0)
Q31	I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.	Decreased by	(11.1)
Q4	My partner and I understand each other completely.	Decreased by	(11.2)
Q20	My partner has all the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.	Decreased by	(10.5)

What, then, is the meaning of these results? What do the findings of the study mean? First, it must be stated clearly that no marriage is devoid of problems or challenges. The truth is that one cannot apply any technical skills or know-how to resolve the problems of marriage or to guarantee a successful marriage. As soon as couples learn that a successful marriage requires hard work on the part of each spouse, the easier it will be to understand that full commitment and dedication is paramount to any successful marriage. This thinking should galvanize pastors and other pastoral care personnel who are dedicated to enriching marriages into action. Pastors and marriage counselors should not relent in teaching and modeling biblical principles of marriage, which God, the Creator of both male and female, initiated from the beginning. Since our communities and societies advocate principles, which are not consistent with the guidelines God gave from the beginning, then Christian leaders should be more proactive and frequent in teaching more about love, marriage, and sex.

Second, the findings of this project mean that there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and the Four ENRICH Scales discussed: Marital satisfaction, couple communication, conflict resolution, and idealistic distortion. The findings specifically show that a domain of things ranging from leisure activities, family time, communication, conflict, financial stress, and sexual satisfaction influence marital satisfaction. Thus, pastors and marriage counselors should stress the importance of marriage enrichment and commitment. Often, when the pressures of day-to-day activities become overwhelming, marital responsibilities becomes less important, rather than taking high priority. Therefore, the findings compel couples to engage intentionally in active ways to enhance their marital relationships.

Third, the findings point to the need for pastors and marriage counselors to teach principles of communication and conflict resolution. Any married couple would agree that married couples, especially multicultural couples, need help in learning how to communicate and deal with conflict because of the challenges that come from culture, belief, and ethnicity. These findings mean special attention should be given to teaching Christian couples how to listen, engage in self-disclosure, and exercise forgiveness, mutual acceptance, and understanding.

Finally, the findings of this study call for pastors and marriage counselors to encourage hope, despite the fact that Christian married couples are experiencing marital stress and marital dissatisfaction. Hope is the enduring structure that holds dissatisfied and unhappy couples in perspective, thus fortifying and equipping them to work toward healthy and successful relationships.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for pastors and other professionals who work with couples in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, both in practice and in future research. This study maintains implications for pastors, marriage counselors, counselors, as well as church members. Therefore, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

First, those who provide care-giving to married couples, including pastors and counselors as well as family life educators, should engage more intentionally in teaching multicultural marriage enrichment seminars, taking into consideration cultural and ethnic diversity. For the couples, this kind of interaction will provide the opportunity to explore, deconstruct, and rebuild a particular disposition regarding attitudes, beliefs, and behavior.

Second, clergy and helping professionals should seek understanding and competence in cultural values and acculturation. Since ethnic diversity is increasing, more and more couples of differing cultural background are choosing to marry. Thus, the clergy needs to increase their effectiveness by learning more about cultural values and acculturation. The United Kingdom is becoming the melting pot for many cultural groups and the likelihood of multicultural relationships will increase. As a direct result of this, the clergy will need to exercise cultural competence for working with multicultural relationships. This approach, however, should be practical, but based on a good theoretical and educational basis.

Third, a new attitude and interest in revisiting the existing multicultural marriage enrichment program as a means of improving and updating current resources should be undertaken. Taken all together, a new interest has awakened in awareness and in the need

to optimize the present marriage enrichment agenda. This new agenda will encourage two things. First, it should focus on a preventive approach to sustain healthy and satisfying marriages. It will seek to prevent marital distress and dissolution by educating couples in specific relationship skills (communication skills and conflict resolution strategies), strengthen families, and promote healthy marriages. Second, it would create a safe place where distressed married couples within the church community can seek help and find a place of safety. It is hoped that this new initiative, which will focus exclusively on multicultural marriages, will form skills-based programs that are made available through seminars, workshops, and presentations.

Fourth, since this study is the first in the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church, a replication of it should be done using the members of other churches by comparing and contrasting the findings to see if these findings are global. Further as a follow up to this project and in light of the already existing marriage support group in the local church, it is recommended that an appropriate marriage enrichment program be developed and implemented on a continual basis. These ongoing programs would nurture and nourish all married couples including those preparing for marriage.

Fifth, a needs-assessment should focus on multicultural couples seeking ways in which marriages can be culturally unique and, at the same time, globally adaptive. Such an assessment would consider questions such as when one should consider a marriage satisfying. Is it satisfying when it adheres to certain cultural values or expectations? Is it satisfying when personal expectations are fulfilled?

Finally, local churches should become a place where married couples of all nationalities can find hope, love, and acceptance as they seek to live, learn and love each other.

Conclusion

Throughout the pages of this project, the discussion about marriage has focused mainly on the factors that influenced marital satisfaction specifically in the context of multicultural couples' relationships.

The discussion began with a biblical and theological reflection of marriage in both the Old and New Testaments. The survey of the Old Testament established that the Bible provides the foundation for understanding God's ideal for marriage. The Genesis record reveals two important things. Firstly, it was God who made the man (Adam) and the woman (Eve) for each other and His sole intention was for both of them to enjoy each other and become one. It was through marriage that they would enjoy this "oneness." Thus, God's intention was for marriage to be life-long, for one man and one woman, and between a male and female. Simply put, marriage was to be permanent, monogamous, and heterosexual. Secondly, since God was aware of human incapacity to love, he gave human beings to take freely of his unconditional love that demonstrates how commitment can be lived. Jesus and Paul repeat this same theme of permanence, monogamy, heterosexuality, and oneness in the New Testament.

The literature showed that marriage satisfaction has been influenced not by a single factor but by multiple factors. In effect, this study established that multidimensional factors conspire to cause marital satisfaction to erode thus causing marital breakdown or separation. This study found that the marital satisfaction of

multicultural couples was influenced through a variety of relationship domains on the Enrich scales: marital satisfaction, couple communication, couple conflict resolution, and idealistic distortion.

Results of the research revealed the poor level of marital satisfaction in most of the couples, confirming the notion that a variety of relationship domains on the ENRICH scales have influenced marital satisfaction. Particularly, findings show that a domain of things ranging from leisure activities, family time, communication, conflict, financial stress, and sexual satisfaction influence marital satisfaction. In addition, findings revealed the various types of couples in this multicultural community. The study identified two couple types as conflicted couples and devitalized couples.

The researcher based on the above and in the interest of multicultural couples at the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church argues that there is a need for a focused educational approach to marriage and marriage enrichment. The aim of this focused educational program is to provide information on how to make their marriage work. Firstly, the educational program will assist marital couples by bringing awareness of the factors that significantly impact marriage in a negative way. An awareness seminar will not just bring out awareness, but it will foster growth and change in attitude. Despite the negativity of marriage and the pain some couples may be experiencing as a result of marital distress, many couples look for ways and means to find paths of resolution. What they may require at their crucial time of need is a focused educational marital enrichment program that could reduce negative behavior and attitudes giving place to developing coping skills thus strengthening and enriching their marriage.

Secondly, an educational focused marriage enrichment program will seek to model to the couples the values of learning interpersonal skills, which are so essential to navigating differences and negativity. Learning how to find the paths of resolution is a valuable skill marriage enrichment program can teach.

Given the results of this study, the third and final thing that multicultural couples can aspire towards is modeling for their relationships the value of secure love, secure sex, and secure relationship (Balswick, 2006). These three characteristics are fundamental and core to the educational program for marriage enrichment. Every married couple regardless of cultural or ethnic background has a basic need for belonging and bonding with their spouse in building a trustworthy and secure love. Multicultural couples irrespective of their country of origin can experience secure love in their relationships, fulfilling God's ideal for each marriage. In addition, it is within this context of secure love that marital couples can experience what secure sex is. Both secure love and secure sex can deepen the marital relationship and enhance marital satisfaction. Finally, the power of secure relationship affords the couples the capacity to experience and express their loving commitment in manifold ways far beyond the ordinary way, thus making real the principle of covenant love on which the marriage institution ordained by God was established.

The description aforementioned puts a tremendous burden on the church that must be discharged effectively if it is to fulfill its role of enriching and nurturing marital relationships. Afforded to the church in effecting this task are the counsels from the Bible and the writings of Ellen White as well as current scientific research. With these tools and

a desire to be what God's ideals are, married couples can experience a transformational change for their marital relationships.

APPENDIX A
ENRICH SURVEY

ENRICH in this study is for married couples.

ENRICH was designed to assist you learn about your marital relationship. Through this you will learn about both yourself and your spouse.

ENRICH will help you identify some of the strengths in your relationship and areas where you have challenges for you to discuss with your spouse. ENRICH results are not intended to predict whether you will have a successful marriage.

ENRICH is not a test and therefore, there is no “right” or “wrong” answers. So please respond to all of the statements according to your point of view.

Please do not discuss these items with your spouse while you are taking ENRICH. After you have completed ENRICH, you are free to discuss your experience or feelings while you were taking ENRICH.

ENRICH response choices

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree.

- _____ 1. I am happy with how we make decisions and resolve conflict.
- _____ 2. I can express my true feelings to my partner.
- _____ 3. To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly.
- _____ 4. My partner and I understand each other completely.
- _____ 5. I am unhappy with our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.
- _____ 6. When we are having a problem, my partner often refuses to talk about it.
- _____ 7. My partner and I have very different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements.
- _____ 8. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
- _____ 9. I am happy with how we share our responsibilities in our household.
- _____ 10. My partner sometimes makes comments that put me down.
- _____ 11. When we discuss problems, my partner understands my opinions and ideas.
- _____ 12. Every new thing I have learned about my partner has pleased me.
- _____ 13. I am unhappy with some of my partner’s personality characteristics or personal habits.
- _____ 14. I wish my partner were more willing to share his/her feelings with me.
- _____ 15. Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.
- _____ 16. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner.
- _____ 17. I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.

- _____ 18. At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want.
- _____ 19. Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.
- _____ 20. My partner has all the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.
- _____ 21. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions
- _____ 22. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me.
- _____ 23. I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.
- _____ 24. I am pleased with how we express affection and relate sexually.
- _____ 25. My partner is a very good listener.
- _____ 26. At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved.
- _____ 27. I am unhappy with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.
- _____ 28. My partner often doesn't understand how I feel.
- _____ 29. When we argue, I usually end up feeling responsible for the problem.
- _____ 30. I am happy with our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and my partner's friends.
- _____ 31. I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.
- _____ 32. To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing.
- _____ 33. At times my partner does not take our disagreements seriously.
- _____ 34. It is difficult for me to share negative feelings with my partner.
- _____ 35. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

APPENDIX B

ENRICH RESULTS

Marital Satisfaction

- (+) 1. I am happy with how we make decisions and resolve conflict.
- (--) 5. I am unhappy with our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.
- (+) 9. I am happy with how we share our household responsibilities.
- (--) 13. I am unhappy with some of my partner's personality characteristics or personal habits.
- (+) 17. I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.
- (--) 21. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way that we make financial decisions.
- (+) 24. I am pleased with how we express affection and relate sexually.
- (--) 27. I am unhappy with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.
- (+) 30. I am happy with our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and my partner's friends.
- (+) 35. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

Communication

- (+) 2. I can express my true feelings to my partner.
- (--) 6. When we are having a problem, my partner often refuses to talk about it.
- (--) 10. My partner sometimes makes comments that put me down.
- (--) 14. I wish my partner were more willing to share his/her feelings with me.
- (--) 18. At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want.
- (--) 22. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me.
- (+) 25. My partner is a very good listener.
- (--) 28. My partner often doesn't understand how I feel.
- (+) 31. I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.
- (--) 34. It is difficult for me to share negative feelings with my partner.

Conflict Resolution

- (--) 3. To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly.
- (--) 7. My partner and I have very different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements.
- (+) 11. When we discuss problems, my partner understands my opinions and ideas.
- (+) 15. Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.
- (--) 19. Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.
- (--) 23. I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.
- (--) 26. At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved.
- (--) 29. When we argue, I usually end up feeling responsible for the problem.
- (--) 32. To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing.
- (--) 33. At times my partner does not take our disagreements seriously.

Idealistic Distortion

- (+) 4. My partner and I understand each other completely.
- (+) 8. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
- (+) 12. Our relationship is a perfect success.
- (+) 16. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner.
- (+) 20. My partner has all the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO USE ENRICH COUPLE SCALES

2007

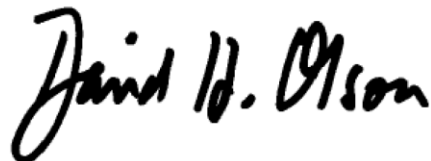
Permission to Use ENRICH Couple Scales

I am pleased to give you permission to use the **ENRICH Couple Scales** in your research project, teaching or clinical work with couples or families. You may either duplicate the materials directly or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgement should be given regarding the name of the instrument, the developers' names, and Life Innovations.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, theses or reports that you complete using the **ENRICH Couple Scales**. This will help us to stay abreast of the most recent developments and research regarding this scale. We thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

In closing, I hope you find the **ENRICH Couple Scales** of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate hearing from you as you make use of this inventory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David H. Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David H. Olson, Ph.D.

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION TO USE ENRICH SURVEY IN THE SOUTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE



Office of the President

South England Conference of
Seventh-day Adventist Church
25 St Johns Road
Watford
Herts WD25 9TR

Tel: [+44 \(0\)1923 232728](tel:+441923232728)
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May 2009

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-335

To Whom It May Concern:

The South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with Augustus Lawrence and Andrews University in his DMin Project Dissertation entitled "A marriage programme to strengthen and support marriage relationship of the multicultural community of the Milton Keynes Seventh-day Adventist Church." He has permission to conduct surveys and interviews in churches and among members of our conference.

Yours truly,

Sam Davis
PRESIDENT
South England Conference

APPENDIX E

PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR MEAN

	Q No.		Pre-Seminar Mean	Post-Seminar Mean
Marital Satisfactionnn	Q1	I am happy with how we make decisions and resolve conflict	3.69	3.52
	Q5	I am unhappy with our communication and feel my partner does not understand me	3.33	3.17
	Q9	I am happy with how we share our responsibilities in our household	4.00	3.76
	Q13	I am unhappy with some of my partner's personality characteristics or personal habits	2.89	2.59
	Q17	I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together	2.81	3.38
	Q21	I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions	2.67	2.93
	Q24	I am pleased with how we express affection and relate sexually	3.39	3.62
	Q27	I am unhappy with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents	3.53	3.00
	Q30	I am happy with our relationship with my parents, in laws, and my partner's friends	3.72	3.72
	Q35	I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values	3.92	3.41

Communication	Q2	I can express my true feelings to my partner	3.89	3.97
	Q6	When we are having a problem, my partner often refuses to talk about it	3.36	3.28
	Q10	My partner sometimes makes comments that put me down	3.53	3.28
	Q14	I wish my partner were more willing to share his/ her feelings with me	2.81	2.62
	Q18	At times it is hard for me to ask my partner for what I want	3.36	3.90
	Q22	Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me	3.56	3.41
	Q25	My partner is a very good listener	3.44	3.45
	Q28	My partner often doesn't understand how I feel	2.89	3.14
	Q31	I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other	3.72	3.31
	Q34	It is difficult for me to share negative feelings with my partner	3.00	3.17

Conflict Resolution	Q3	To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly	2.92	3.00
	Q7	My partner and I have very different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements	2.86	2.66
	Q11	When we discuss problems, my partner understands my opinions and ideas	3.33	3.52
	Q15	Even during disagreements, I can share my true feelings and ideas with my partner	3.50	3.66
	Q19	Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues	2.58	2.83
	Q23	I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner	2.97	3.38
	Q26	At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved	2.58	2.66
	Q29	When we argue, I usually end up feeling responsible for the problem	3.19	3.21
	Q32	To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing	3.03	3.21
	Q33	At times my partner does not take our disagreements seriously	3.28	3.14
Idealistic Distortion	Q4	My partner and I understand each other completely	3.42	3.03
	Q8	My partner completely understand and sympathises with my every mood	2.92	2.93
	Q12	Every new thing I have learned about my partner has pleased me	3.17	3.03
	Q16	I have never regretted my relationship with my partner	3.64	3.72
	Q20	My partner has all the qualities I've always wanted in a mate	3.39	3.03

APPENDIX F

EMPOWERING COUPLES PROGRAM



EMPOWERING COUPLES PROGRAM

Building on Your Strengths

Facilitator
Augustus Lawrence
Start time: 3:30pm
PROMPT



Overall Goal of Empowering Couples

*“The overall goal of
Empowering Couples is to
help couples build
a more vital &
satisfying relationship.”*



Process of Empowering

*Turn Your Stumbling Blocks
(issues) into
Stepping Stones (strengths).*



Empowering Couples Book

- Exercises for Couples.
- Designed to help couples identify & build on their strengths.
- Focuses on ten significant areas.
- Each session begins with Quiz and ends with Couple Exercises.
- Based on PREPARE/ENRICH survey of 21,501 married couples.



Goals of Program

- Identify your couple strengths.
- Build & increase your couple strengths.
- Identify some of your stumbling blocks (issues, problems).
- Turn your stumbling blocks into stepping stones.



Ground Rules for Group

- Everything shared in the group is confidential.
- All sharing with other couples in group is voluntary.
- When sharing in group, speak only for yourself and not partner.
- Before sharing about your couple relationship, “check it out” with your partner.
- Goal of group is to have fun.



Challenge of Marriage

"For one human being to love another is perhaps the most difficult task of all, the epitome, the ultimate cost. It is that striving for which all other striving is merely preparation."

Rainer Maria Rilke



Video

Overview of Empowering Couple Program



Session One

**The Path of
the Strong-**
Identifying common
stumbling blocks and growth
areas



The Path of the Strong

"The block of granite, which is an obstacle on the path of the weak, becomes a stepping stone on the path of the strong."

Thomas Carlyle



Empowering You

**Turn Your
Stumbling Blocks
into
Stepping Stones !**



Outline of Session

- Strengths of Happy Couples
- Stumbling Blocks of all Couples
- Measuring Marital Satisfaction
- Video Tape Illustration
- Couple Exercise & Group Sharing
- Suggestions for Improving Area




Advantages of Marriage based on Research

- Married people have a healthier lifestyle.
- Married couples live longer.
- Married couples have a better sexual relationship.




Show Video

Building Your Couple Strengths



Couple Exercise 1:

Identifying & Discussing Couple Strengths




Couple Strengths Exercise

- Each person identifies 3 strengths in their relationship.
- Each couple shares their strengths with their partner.
- Couples decide what they want to share with other couples.
- Group Sharing—couples share what they learned with other couples.



Strengths of Happy Couples

1. Satisfied with how they talk.
2. Creative in handling conflict
3. Feel very close to each other.
4. Partner seldom too controlling.
5. Partner understands my opinions.



Strengths of Happy Couples

6. Satisfied with amount of affection.
7. Good balance of leisure time apart & together.
8. Partner's family or friends do not interfere with marriage.
9. Agree on how to spend money.
10. Satisfied with how to express spiritual values & beliefs.



Couple Exercise 2

Identifying & Discussing Stumbling Blocks



Stumbling Blocks Exercise

- Each person identifies 3 issues in their relationship.
- Each couple shares their issues with their partner.
- Couples decide what they want to share with other couples.
- Each couple shares what they learned with other couples.



Common Stumbling Blocks

1. Problems sharing leadership.
2. Partner is too stubborn.
3. Children reduce couple satisfaction.
4. Partner too negative or critical.
5. Wishing had more time together.



Common Stumbling Blocks

6. Wish partner would be more willing to share feelings.
7. Always feel responsible for problems.
8. Go out of way to avoid conflict with partner.
9. Difficulty completing tasks.
10. Differences never seem to get resolved.



Empower Your Marriage

*“Turn Your
Stumbling Blocks
Into
Stepping Stones.”*



Session two

COMMUNICATION The Key to Intimacy



COMMUNICATION

*"We were born with two ears
and one mouth.
That ought to tell us something. "*



Strengths of Happy Couples

- Very satisfied how we talk.
- Partner understands how I feel.
- Easy to express true feelings.
- Partner is very good listener.
- Partner does not put me down.



Stumbling Blocks

- Wish partner more willing to share feelings (82%).
- Difficulty asking partner for what I want (75%).
- Partner does not understand me (72%).
- Partner refuses to discuss issues (71%).
- Partner makes comments that put me down (67%).



Communication Styles

- **Passive Style**—unable or unwilling to share feelings.
- **Aggressive Style**—blaming and accusing partner.
- **Assertive Style**—expressing feelings and ideas.




Making "I" Statements

- "I wish that....."
- "I feel that....."
- "I prefer that....."
- Not "You should...."



People High in Assertiveness Also Are:

- Greater Self Confidence
- Less Avoidance of Issues
- Less Partner Dominance
- Like Personality of Partner
- Better Communication



Communication & Intimacy

Person 1	Person 2	Pattern	Win- Lose	Intimacy
Passive	Passive	Devital.	Both Lose	Low
Passive	Aggress.	Dominate	One wins	Low
Aggress.	Aggress.	Conflict.	Both Lose	Low
Assertive	Passive	Frustrat.	Both Lose	Low
Assertive	Aggress.	Confront.	Both Lose	Low
Assertive	Assertive	Vital	Both Win	High



Active Listening

"We hear only half of what is said to us, understand only half of that, believe only half of that & remember only half of that."

Mignon McLaughlin



Active Listening

- Focus on other person's message, both verbal and non-verbal.
- Restate message, focusing both on content and feeling level.
- Repeat message until partner says that you seem to fully understand.




Show Video

Improving Your Communication Skills



Couple Exercise

Exercise for Practicing Assertiveness & Active Listening.



Creating & Sharing a Wish

- After identifying three things they like about their communication, the couple should share these with each other.
- After identifying three things they wish their partner would change about their communication, they should each share this with their partner.



Suggestions for Improving Communication

- Couple Discussing Each Day – 10-15 minutes.
- Increasing Self Disclosure
- Being Assertive
- Active Listening
- Daily Compliments



Chapter 3

CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Conflict is Inevitable

**“Happiness is not the
absence of conflict,
but the ability to cope
with it.”**



Outline of Session

- Strengths of Happy Couples
- Stumbling Blocks of all Couples
- Video Tape Illustration
- Couple Exercise & Group Sharing
- Suggestions for Improving Area



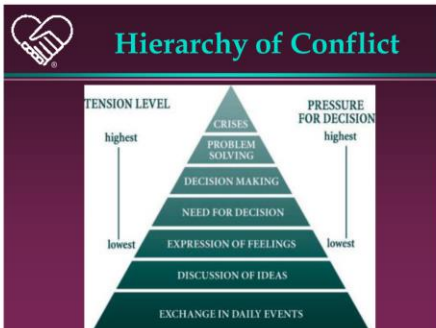
Strengths of Happy Couples

- Partner understands my opinions.
- Can share feelings and ideas during arguments.
- Able to resolve differences.
- Similar ideas about how to resolve disagreements.
- Partner takes my disagreements seriously.



Hierarchy of Conflict

- Exchange of daily events.
- Discussion of ideas.
- Expression of feelings.
- Need for decision.
- Decision making.
- Problem solving.
- Crises



-
- ### Stumbling Blocks
- One person ends up feeling responsible for the problem. (81%)
 - Go out of way to avoid conflict. (79%)
 - Differences never seem to get resolved. (78%)
 - Different ways to resolve conflict. (78%)
 - Serious disputes about minor issues. (78%)

-
- ### Constructive versus Destructive Styles
- Clarify issues vs. bringing up old issues.
 - Express positive and negative feelings vs. only negative.
 - Focus on issues vs. other person.
 - Both accept blame vs. blaming each other.
 - Both win vs. one win & other lose.

-
- ### Couple Exercise
- Couple Takes Quiz (p. 63)
 - Couple Scores Quiz (p. 64)
 - Couple Identifies Their Strengths
 - Couple Identifies Stumbling Blocks
 - Later, Couple will discuss how to:
Turn Your Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones.

-
- ### Conflict Resolution Quiz
- We are able to compromise.
 - We tend to ignore issues.
 - We allow minor issues to become major problems.
 - We have different styles of handling issues.
 - We are able to work out our issues.

-
- ### Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict
- Set time and place for discussion.
 - Define problem or issue.
 - How each contributes to problem.
 - Past attempts that have failed.
 - Brainstorming solutions.



Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict

- Discuss and evaluate solutions.
- Agree on one solution to try.
- Agree how each person will work toward solution.
- Set up another meeting.
- Reward each other for progress.



Show Video on Ten Steps

All Ten Steps are important, but the Brainstorming step is critical.



Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict

Couple should complete the Couple Exercise on pages 60 & 61.



Group Discussion

- What did you like about using the Ten Step Model ?
- What was the most difficult part of using the Ten Step Model ?
- Why use the Ten Step Model ?



Suggestions for Improving Conflict Resolution

- View conflict as normal in a close relationship.
- Do not avoid dealing with issues.
- Use the Ten Steps for more difficult issues.
- Remember to praise each other for progress in resolving your differences.



Session 4

5th March

"I'm the man in this relationship, why should I do the washing up?"
Household tasks: his and hers.
Discussing your strengths and growth areas in roles



Who Does What?

Who does the laundry?
Who pays the bills?
Who does the shopping?
Who does the washing up?
Who takes care of the ironing?
Who cleans?
Who does the cooking?



Working Together as Team

**“Coming Together is Easy
Keeping Together is Progress
Working Together is Success.”**
Henry Ford



Challenges facing couples & Marital Satisfaction

- a. Shift households, where spouses work opposite shifts and alternate domestic and caregiver responsibilities



- b. Households in which men stay home with children while women support the family financially



Dual-Earning Couples & Marital Satisfaction

- a. Role conflict – performing the role of worker, parent and spouse. Role conflict confronts us with “too many balls to juggle.”
- b. Role overload – when the various roles we play require us to do more than we can do



- c. Role overload – we are expected to wear “too many hats.” Care for children, be intimate with our spouses, work eight hours a day, shop, clean house, take children to school, and so on...



Strengths of Happy Couples

- Both equally make adjustments.
- Both satisfied with division of housework.
- Both work to have equal marriage.
- Couples make most decisions jointly.
- Housework divided based on preferences.



Equalitarian & Happiness

- If both partners perceive marriage as equal, 81 % of couples happy.
- If both partners see marriage as traditional, 82 % of couples unhappy.
- If husband says traditional and wife says equal, 50 % of couples happy.
- If wife says traditional and husband says equal, 37 % of couples happy.



Stumbling Blocks

- Concern about unfair division of housework. (49%)
- Housework not based on interests. (44%)
- Husband not willing to adjust as much as the wife. (44%)
- Woman running household and working outside of home. (44 %)
- Disagreement about having equal marriage. (40%)



Equality in Power

*"All animals are equal,
but some animals are more
equal than others."*

George Orwell

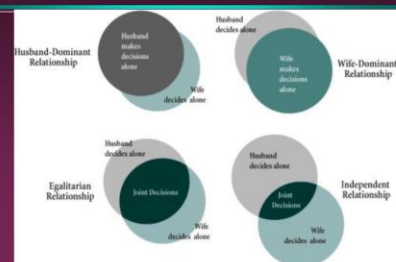


Four Types of Leadership

- Husband Dominant
- Wife Dominant
- Independent
- Equalitarian



Four Types of Leadership





Household Tasks

- Couple Complete Exercise
- Couple Compare Their Responses
- Discuss how you each would like to change who handles what roles.
- Revise your lists and agree on tasks you would like to exchange.



Couple Exercise

- Couple Takes Quiz
- Couple Scores Quiz
- Couple Identifies their Strengths
- Couple Identify Stumbling Blocks
- Later, Couple can discuss how to:

*Turn Your Stumbling Blocks
into Stepping Stones.*



Role Relationship Quiz

- Career is equally important to man and woman.
- Need to negotiate and compromise more in an equal relationship.
- If both working, husband should do same amount of housework.
- Divide housework by interest.
- Make most decisions jointly.



Suggestions for Improving Role Relationship

- Forget about “Helping Out”
- Discuss Roles Weekly
- Be Flexible
- Be Open to Change
- Work together as a team



EMPOWERING COUPLES PROGRAM Building on Your Strengths

Facilitator
Augustus Lawrence
Start time: 3:30pm
PROMPT



Session Five

Managing Finances:
**How satisfied are you with the
way you manage finances as
a couple?**



Empowered Couples

- National survey of 21, 500 marriages of various nationalities
- To identify what are the characteristics and strengths of happy couples
- In other words, what are they doing right that we can learn from them
- What are the common problems that all couples seem to have?



Possessions

“There is nothing wrong with people possessing riches. The wrong comes when riches possess people.”

Billy Graham



The Price of Money

- Financial issues:
 1. common to all families.
 2. the most common source of stress for couples and families.
 3. No one is immune to problems or potential problems related to money



The price of Money

- Arguments about money may represent conflict over power and control, over differing styles of spending and saving, and over different visions of what money can and cannot do



Christ & Money

40% of Christ's recorded stories deals with money

“You entrusted me with five talents. See I have gained five more.”

“Well done good and faithful servant!”

“You entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.”

“Well done good and faithful servant!”



“Master, I knew that you are a hard man... So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.”

“You wicked, lazy servant!”

Matthew 25:15-26, NIV



Strengths of Happy Couples

- Agree on how to spend money.
- No concerns about how partner spends money.
- Satisfied with decisions about savings.
- Major debts are not a problem.
- Able to make good financial decisions.



Stumbling Blocks

- Wish partner were more careful in spending money. (72%)
- Have trouble saving money. (72%)
- Problems deciding to purchase. (66%)
- Major debts are a problem. (56%)
- Partner tries to control money. (51%)



4 Money plans: which one are you using?

Plan A One Boss Plan

- “This is my money!”
- “I’ll use it as I please!”
- “Ask no questions!”



- Spouse receives an allocation
- Is ignorant of his income
- Is unaware of expenses. If she ask: “Honey where’s the money?”
- She must run for her life!

This is not a plan for God’s Happy Family



Plan B

- The Two Boss Plan



This is my money.



This is my money



Two Boss Plan

- Incomes are kept secret.
- They decide who pays which expenses.
- If one asks “Honey, where’s the money?”
- There’s a fight!
- This is not a plan for God’s Family!
- It violates the philosophy of marriage.



Plan C – Two Partner Plan

- Not “My money”
- Not “Your money”
- It’s “Our money!”



- ✓ It is our income.
- ✓ Major expenses are decided together.
- ✓ Budget is created together.
- ✓ Getting into debt requires a joint decision.
- ✓ We decide collectively on savings.
- ✓ This is the plan for the Family of God!



Plan D: God Is Owner

**The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’
says the LORD of hosts.”**

Haggai 2:8



Video on Financial Management

- Couples are discussing their Short Term & Long Term Financial Goals.
- By sharing and agreeing on their goals, a couple can work together more effectively to achieve their goals.




Different Styles of Spending & Saving

- Saving/Spending problems are common among couples because individuals often have different personal styles of spending and saving
- On one end of a continuum are people who seem to throw money around and on the other end are people who compulsively save money.




Different Views of the Meaning of Money

- Money as status
- Money as security
- Money as enjoyment
- Money as control




Overuse of Credit & Credit Cards

- Overspending is another common stumbling block often caused from buying on credit




- Savings or a Saving Plan
- Debt implementation strategy
- Joint financial decision making
- Adherence to a Budget
 - » Benefits of a budget




Debt Implementation Strategy

- **"Owe no one anything except to love one another."** Romans 13:8
- **"The borrower is servant to the lender."** Proverbs 22:7




- **Make a firm decision: No more debt!**
- **Destroy all credit cards. Keep just one for emergency**
- **Maintain payments on current commitments.**
- **List all debts in order: start with the smallest and end with the largest.**
- **Use all extra income to pay off number one as quickly as possible.**



Setting Financial Goals

Complete
Couple Exercise 5.3:
Setting Short-Term
& Long-Term Goals



Take My Life

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.



Take my love, my lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.



Suggestions for Improving

- Monthly review and update finances and goals.
- Talk about values in life and relate to money.
- Talk about spender vs. saver pattern.
- If ongoing financial issues, seek financial consultant.



Chapter Six

Spiritual Beliefs



Spiritual Beliefs

**“ We are not human beings
having a spiritual experience,
we are spiritual beings having
a human experience. ”**

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



Outline of Session

- Strengths of Happy Couples
- Stumbling Blocks of all Couples
- Video Tape Illustration
- Couple Exercise & Group Sharing
- Suggestions for Improving Area



Strengths of Happy Couples

- Satisfied how we express spiritual values and beliefs.
- Feel closer because of spiritual beliefs.
- Shared beliefs improve our couple relationship.
- No tensions because of beliefs.
- Rely on spiritual beliefs during difficult times.



Value of Beliefs

- Provides purpose & meaning in life.
- Faith communities embrace and support marriage.
- Refuge in time of crises.
- Enriches daily life.



Common Stumbling Blocks

- Not resolving spiritual differences. (53%)
- Beliefs do not bring us closer. (50%)
- Do not rely on spiritual beliefs during difficult times. (48%)
- Dissatisfied with how we express spiritual beliefs. (48%)
- Spiritual beliefs create tension. (36%)



Couple Exercise

- Couple Takes Quiz (p. 117)
- Couple Scores Quiz (p. 118)
- Couple Identifies their Strengths (p. 117)
- Couple Identifies Stumbling Blocks
- Later, couple can discuss how to:
Turn Your Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones.



Spiritual Beliefs Quiz

- We agree how to practice our spiritual beliefs.
- Religion has different meanings for each of us.
- Agree on level of spiritual beliefs.
- Regular attendance at a place of worship is important to me.
- Spiritual beliefs help us feel closer as a couple.



Couple Exercise (Page 116)

- Write down three uplifting moments when you were energized in the last month or year.
- Write down three people with whom you are most joyful.



Spirituality

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."
Helen Keller



EMPOWERING COUPLES PROGRAM Building on Your Strengths

AC Lawrence
Facilitator
19th March 2011
3:30pm



Session Seven Part I

Intimacy and Sexuality.
Discussing your strengths
and growth areas in sexual
relationship



Sexuality in Marriage

**“ The war between the sexes is
the only one in which both
sides regularly sleep with the
enemy. ”**

Quentin Crisp



Strengths of Happy Couples

- Completely satisfied with affection from partner.
- Sexual relationship fulfilling.
- Partner does not use or refuse sex in an unfair way.
- No concerns about partners interest in me sexually.
- Not worried about partner having an affair.



His and Her View of Sexuality

- For many men, being sexual is the way to increase their feelings of closeness.
- For many women, they are more open to being sexual if they feel closeness to their partner.



Common Stumbling Blocks

- Dissatisfied with level of affection. (70%)
- Difficulty keeping sex interesting & enjoyable. (62%)
- Sex is not satisfying or fulfilling. (57%)
- Difficulty discussing sexual topics. (54%)
- Affection interpreted as sexual advance. (50%)



Sexual Relationship Quiz

- Satisfied with amount of affection.
- Similar sexual interests and expectations.
- Partner uses or refuses sex in an unfair way.
- Difficulty keeping relationship interesting and enjoyable.
- Easy to talk about sexuality.



Intimacy & Needs

- His story
 “If we could get our sex life straightened out, everything else would be fine, but when we don’t have sex, I feel that she doesn’t care for me at all, and I can’t go on like this forever”



His and Her View of Sexuality

- Her story
 “We don’t ever do anything together anymore; he is always gone. We used to do things together. Our communication is almost nonexistent. We don’t ever talk. He doesn’t understand my feelings. When I try to share my struggles, he gives me a quick answer and walks out of the room.”



- The Problem?

A quest for intimacy

The tension



What is intimacy?

Comes from the Latin word “*intimus*”, signifying “*innermost*”

“*most deeply internal or inmost qualities of a person*”

Dennis A Bagarozzi, *Marital Intimacy*, pp. 67, 81



“it involves two people opening their **inner** selves to each other. It is entering into each other’s lives emotionally, intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually.”

Gary Chapman, *Five signs of a functional family*, p. 46



“the feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bonding that individuals may experience in a love relationship. It involves those feelings that create the experience of warmth, respect, and concern”

Robert J. Sternberg, eds., Satisfaction in close relationships, 42, 43



- Intimacy is open, honest and affectionate toward each other
- It is not an event but a process
- It recognises weaknesses but chooses to accept each other as equals and refuses to apply power or control over the other when resolving differences
- It involves sharing joys, pains, hurts or fears



COMPONENTS OF AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

Emotional Intimacy



EI - sharing our feelings

- What we encounter through our five senses
- Connecting with the other on the deepest of levels, where true inner feelings, dreams, hurts and fears can be shared



ADVANTAGES?

- Learning and understanding of the other through communication
- Can gain interest in the favourite topics of the other
- A safe environment to talk and listen



Disadvantages?

- Demanding the other to agree with you
- Focusing and dwelling on mistakes, past and present



- **Intellectual Intimacy –**
 - Sharing our thoughts
 - Communication
 - Caring
 - Commitment
 - Common Values



- **Social Intimacy**
 - Spending time together and discussing time we have spent apart
- When was your last social intimacy with your spouse?



- **Spiritual intimacy – the foundation**
 - the power of sharing some of the thoughts of spiritual realities
 - two people joining in prayer will understand and experience the power of spiritual intimacy

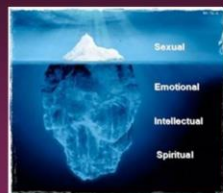


“our sexuality is a window into who we are”

David Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage*



what is under the surface in your relationship makes all the difference.



Some Barriers to Intimacy


Incompatibility
Guilt
Conflicting core values
Cohabitation
Pornography
Fatigue and Stress
Effects of Previous Relationships

 **Tools for connection**

- Kissing



- Love & Foreplay
- Hugging till relaxed
- Eye- open orgasm
Where is your head during sex?
It isn't what you do, it's the way you do it



- Exploring the 'intimus' of intimacy



<p>She needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Security -Protection -Comfort and -Approval 	<p>He needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first thing he can't do without is sexual fulfillment • To be understood as "not perfect" but as a human being who bruises, who has fears, tears and weaknesses
---	--



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A husband willing to assume spiritual leadership of the family • A partner in parenting • A caring and one who provides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • To be honored in his own home • To be desired sexually and emotionally • needed & wanted • To be considered the most important in his wife's universe
---	---

 **Is your intimacy reservoir dry?**

1. The most effective way to increase your Intimacy level is to ensure your spiritual "reservoir" is constantly full.
2. Spiritual "reservoir" is constantly full through the pursuit of a love relationship with God



3. When your Spiritual Intimacy reservoir becomes depleted due to lack of attention to prayer, worship, Bible reading, meditation, Fasting,
4. Opportunity abounds for the barriers to intimacy to fill the void
5. Just as husband and wife enjoy sexual intimacy - ALONE



6. So Christ wants to have spiritual Intimacy with me - ALONE
7. TOGETHER as couples continue kneeling in prayer on a regular basis spiritual intimacy between that husband and wife is greatly increased



What am I suppose to say?

- Communication-Key to Intimacy
- What to communicate?
- Six simple words:
 - ✓ Praise
 - ✓ Appreciation
 - ✓ Value
 - ✓ Needs
 - ✓ Feelings
 - ✓ Love




- QUESTION
- Where did you get your sex education?
 - Home?
 - Church?
 - School?
 - Television?
 - In the Street?



- Sex
 - Is not dirty. It is clean!
 - Is not nasty. It is holy!
 - Is not common. It is sacred!
 - Is not only human. It is also divine!



- Big Differences Exist Between Male and Female



- MAN
- Stimulated by what he sees

- WOMAN
- Stimulated by how she feels



- Differences

We are like Two Stoves!




<p>Male</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a GAS STOVE • QUICKLY turned on • QUICKLY turned off • SHOULD do foreplay • PROVIDES afterglow 	<p>She</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like Electric stove • Slowly turned on • Slow to cool down • Needs foreplay • Enjoys afterglow
---	---




- The wife needs Time for Foreplay and Time for Afterglow!

And the husband should provide it!



- Variations in sexual desire can be caused by:
 - Differences in male - female biology.
 - Difference in temperaments
 - Health problems.



- Physical, mental or emotional overload.
- Significant difference



- Physical, mental or emotional overload.
- Significant difference in age.



- Bob and Elaine have been cuddling on the couch drinking wine, and watching the late movie on television. Elaine starts fondling Bob's penis, but it does not get erect, although Bob wants to have intercourse.



- Across town, Sally and Don returned from the ball game more than an hour ago and immediately took off their clothes and went to bed. They have been kissing and caressing pretty much steadily since then, but Sally's vagina has remained dry.



- Next door, their neighbors Dave and Dell are both excited and wet, and Dave has come several times, Dell wants badly to have an orgasm, too, but no matter what both of them do, Dell cannot quite come.
- Does Bob have erectile dysfunction?



- Is Sally the victim of inhibited sexual excitement?
- Does Dell have orgasmic dysfunction?
- Yes. All 3 are sexually dysfunctional for the moment, that is, they are not responding sexually in the way that they want.



Sexual dysfunctions of men

- Climax too early
- Anxiety about performance
- Lacked interest in sex
- Unable to keep an erection
- Unable to have orgasm
- Sex not pleasurable
- Pain during sex



Sexual Disorders

- Sexual Desire Disorders
- Sexual Arousal Disorders
- Orgasm Disorders
- Sexual Pain Disorders



Sexual dysfunctions of women

- Lacked interest in sex
- Unable to have orgasm
- Sex not pleasurable
- Had trouble lubricating
- Pain during sex
- Anxiety about performance
- Climax too early



- Sexual desire disorders
 - Hypoactive sexual desire disorder
 - Deficient or absent sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity with anyone.




- Excessive sexual desire – hyperactive desire, sexual addiction
- Sexual arousal disorders – failure to attain or maintain erection or vaginal lubrication and swelling despite adequate stimulation



- Erectile dysfunction – recurrent and persistent inability to attain or maintain a firm erection despite adequate stimulation



- Orgasm disorders
 - » Premature ejaculation
 - » Inhibited Male (inhibited female) orgasm or retarded ejaculation or ejaculatory incompetence
 - » Examples: delayed ejaculation or a total inability to ejaculate despite adequate periods of sexual excitement.




Communication Circle

- Speak wisely.
- Listen actively.
- Exchange gracefully.
- Create Win-win solution.



*I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH
CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME*

Phil 4:13




Couple Exercise (Page 131)

- Plan A Romantic Adventure
 - » Be Realistic
 - » Plan Something you can actually do in the next few months.
 - » Plan something that is not too expensive.



Improving Sexual Health

- Good sex begins while your clothes are still on.
- Talk with your partner about affection and sexuality.
- Don't let sex become routine.
- Nurture the romance in your life.



Chapter Eight

Mapping Your Couple Relationship



Significance of Family

“In your couple relationship, you either repeat what you learned in your family or you tend to do the opposite.”

David H. Olson



Strengths of Happy Couples on Closeness

- Feel very close to each other.
- Togetherness is top priority.
- We ask each other for help.
- Find it easy to do things together.
- Enjoy spending time together.



Couple Closeness

Balancing
Separateness
versus
Togetherness




What is Couple Closeness?

- Refers to how emotionally connected you feel to another person.
- It involves how you balance separateness and togetherness.




- Separateness is the extent to which each person does their own thing.
- Togetherness is the extent to which the couple mutually shares activities, ideas and feelings.

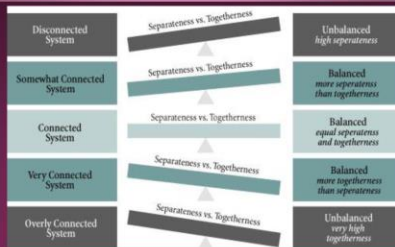



Five Levels of Closeness

- *Overly Connected*-----Unbalanced
- *Very Connected*-----Balanced
- *Connected*-----Balanced
- *Somewhat Connected*---Balanced
- *Disconnected*-----Unbalanced



Five Levels of Closeness

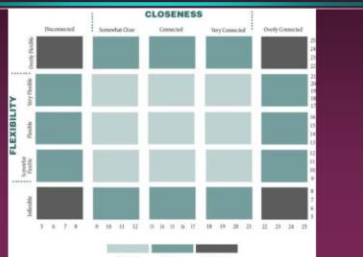



Couple Closeness

- Couple Takes Quiz (p. 139)
- Couple Scores the Quiz (p. 139)
- Locate the level of Closeness by matching your score with levels on the Couple Map (page 141)
- Couple Compares & Discusses their Closeness levels with each other.



Couple Map




Strengths of Happy Couples on Flexibility

- Creative in handling differences.
- Make most decisions jointly.
- Can adjust to change when necessary.
- Are flexible in our lifestyle.
- Compromise on problems.



Couple Flexibility

Balancing
Stability
versus
Change

Five Levels of Flexibility

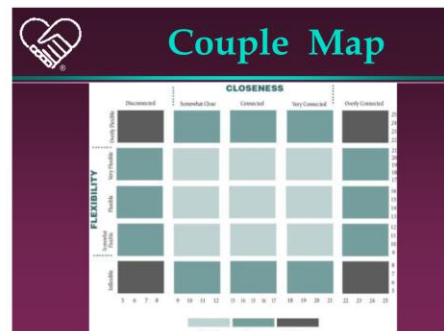
- *Overly Flexible*-----Unbalanced
- *Very Flexible*-----Balanced
- *Flexible*-----Balanced
- *Somewhat Flexible*-----Balanced
- *Inflexible*-----Unbalanced

Five Levels of Flexibility

Inflexible System	Stability vs. Change	Unbalanced very little change
Somewhat Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced some change
Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced moderate change
Very Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced considerable change
Overly Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Unbalanced a lot of change

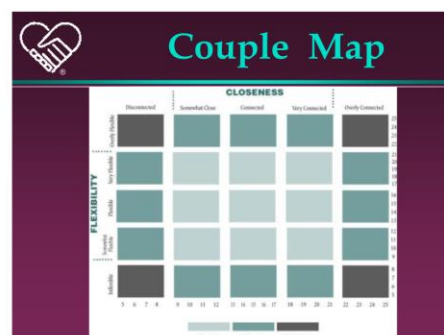
Couple Flexibility

- Couple Takes Quiz (p. 140)
- Couple Scores the Quiz (p. 140)
- Locate the level of Flexibility by matching your score with levels on the Couple Map (p. 141)
- Couple should compare & discuss their levels with each other.



Show Video on Couple Map

The Couple Map can help you understand how you and your partner see your relationship regarding closeness & flexibility.





Couple Map

- Couple Map-- Figure 8.4 (page 153)
- Each person should plot their scores from Closeness and Flexibility onto the Couple Map.
- Discuss similarities and differences in how you see your couple relationship.



Couple Exercise

- Think about what you like about your closeness & flexibility.
- Think of one way to increase your couple closeness.
- Think of one way to increase your couple flexibility.



Chapter Nine

CHILDREN And PARENTING



Parenting Theories

“ Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children and no theories.”

John Wilmot



Outline of Session

- Strengths of Happy Couples
- Stumbling Blocks of all Couples
- Video Tape Illustration
- Couple Exercise & Group Sharing
- Suggestions for Improving Area



Parenting Strengths of Happy Couples

- Satisfied with how parenting is shared.
- My partner focuses as much on our marriage as the children.
- We agree on discipline.
- We agree on how to financially provide for our children.
- Children do not create problems for our marriage.



Stumbling Blocks in Parenting

- Having children reduced our marital satisfaction. (84%)
- Father is not involved enough with our children. (68%)
- Dissatisfied with how parenting is shared. (66%)
- Disagree on discipline. (66%)
- Partner focuses more on children than on marriage. (64%)

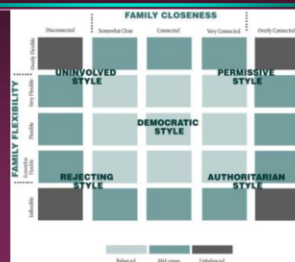


Parenting Styles

- Democratic style – Balanced
- Authoritarian style
- Permissive style
- Rejecting style
- Uninvolved style



Family Map



Effect of Parenting Styles

- Democratic – self reliant, friendly, cheerful & achievement oriented.
- Authoritarian – conflicted, irritable, unhappy & unstable.
- Permissive – rebellious, impulsive & low achieving.
- Rejecting – immature and troubled
- Uninvolved – lonely, withdrawn and low achievement.



Parenting Quiz

- Couple Take Quiz (page 173)
- Couple Score Quiz (p. 174)
- Couple Identifies their Strengths (p. 173)
- Couple Identifies Stumbling Blocks
- Couple Discusses how to:
Turn Your Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones.



Parenting Quiz

- Father is actively involved in childrearing & parenting.
- We are satisfied with how we discipline our children.
- Parenting is stressful on our marriage.
- We give more attention to our children than our marriage.
- Satisfied with how we share parenting.



Suggestions on Parenting

- Make your marriage a priority.
- Recognize parenting is a team effort.
- Develop a joint plan for parenting and discipline.
- Support each other or your children will divide & conquer.



Parenting as Peoplemaking

One hundred years from now
It will not matter what kind of car I
drove,
What kind of house I lived in.
But one hundred years from now
The world may be a little better
Because I was important
In the life of my child.



Chapter Ten

Personal, Couple & Family Goals



Visualize Your Goals

“Whatever you can do or
dream you can do, you
can. Boldness has a
genius, magic and
power to it.”
Johann Goethe



Outline of Session

- Couple takes Quiz on Goals & Discusses with Partner.
- Stumbling Blocks of all Couples
- Video Tape Illustration
- Couple Exercise & Group Sharing
- Suggestions for Improving Area



Goal Quiz

- We share common couple and family goals.
- My partner is supportive of my personal goals.
- Our personal and family goals are not clearly defined.
- We are able to accomplish most of our goals.
- We have clear goals for our couple relationship.



Couple Exercise

- Couple Takes Quiz (p. 191)
- Couple Scores Quiz (p. 192)
- Couple Identifies their Strengths (p. 191)
- Couple Identifies Stumbling Blocks
- Couple Discusses how to:
Turn Your Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones.



Common Stumbling Blocks

- Lack of awareness of each other's goals.
- Personal versus Family Goals
- Conflicting Goals in Couple
- Negative Thinking
- Procrastination



Suggestions for Achieving Goals

- Define and Prioritize Goals
- Visualize Goals
- Fall Down Seven Times, Get up Eight
- Identify Steps for Achieving Your Goals



Couple Exercise

Make a List of Goals
(page 188) and the Discuss:
PERSONAL GOALS
COUPLE GOALS
FAMILY GOALS



Developing An Action Plan Using CHANGE Model

- Commit Yourself to Goal
- Habits—Break Old and Start New
- Action—Take One Step at a Time
- Never Give Up—Lapses will occur.
- Goal Oriented—Focus on the Positive
- Evaluate Progress & Reward Each Other



Show Video on Goals

- Developing a Couple Action Plan using the CHANGE Model will bring positive change in your relationship and life.
- Use page 190 in your book to complete your Couple Action Plan.



Developing An Action Plan Using CHANGE Model

- Commit Yourself to Goal
- Habits—Break Old and Start New
- Action—Take One Step at a Time
- Never Give Up—Lapses will occur.
- Goal Oriented—Focus on the Positive
- Evaluate Progress & Reward Each Other



Working Together

**Coming together is beginning;
Keeping together is progress;
Working together is success.**

Henry Ford

REFERENCE LIST

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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